

IN THE
MOUNTAIN'S
SHADOW

MARY RODNEY



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IN THE
MOUNTAIN'S
SHADOW



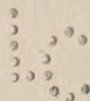
Ena

IN THE MOUNTAIN'S SHADOW

*A Tale of Life, Love and Adventure
on a Western Ranch*

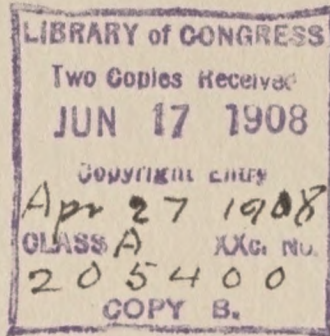
By Mary Rodney

Author of "Four Girls"

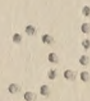


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CHAPTER I

TRANSPLANTED

In the spring of 1889, as the large steamboat, *The City of Baton Rouge*, was leaving the wharf at the foot of Canal Street in New Orleans, there stood on her deck two girls.

When the last fleck of a pocket-handkerchief, waved by their friends, faded in the distance, the younger of the girls turned away to hide her tears. Her sister, perceiving her emotion, fondly placed her arm protectingly around her, saying:

"Ena, you must be brave, for, although we are leaving all our friends and the dear old city of our birth, we are going to our nearest relative."

"O Hilder, but Idaho seems so far away and everything will be so strange," and again the tears began to flow.

Hilder Graham thought it best not to check her, but gently led Ena to a seat near the railing, where she could look out on the broad Mississippi River and see the flitting landscape, thus diverting her mind.

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The Graham family consisted of three girls, who, being left orphans at an early age, had been reared by relatives. Fanny Graham, the oldest sister, having met a man from Idaho at the New Orleans Exposition, had married him, and gone with him to his Western home. It was to her that Hilder and Ena were going.

Fanny's husband, Mr. Drisco, owned a large sanitarium having natural hot springs on the premises, and the water possessed great medicinal qualities. As there were a number of boarders, Mrs. Drisco was obliged to have assistance; so she sent for her sisters, thinking at the same time, that it would be pleasant for them to be together.

When Hilder and Ena landed at the pier at St. Louis, their first thought was a shoe store, where they could be fitted out with warm overshoes suitable for the Western climate. When Hilder asked to see snowshoes, the clerk eyed her with astonishment.

"Surely, miss," he answered, "you have made a mistake; I think you must mean arctic overshoes. See, are these what you wish?"

"Certainly, they are," laughingly said Ena. "That is the first blunder made by Southern

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girls going West, but I dare say it won't be our last."

"You will find many new and strange things in the part of the country to which you are going," volunteered the clerk. For they had informed him that Idaho was their destination.

After making a few more purchases, the girls were ready to board the train for their distant home. As is generally the case, they met pleasant traveling companions, which made the journey seem less tedious. They were agreeably surprised when the conductor told them that the next stopping-place would be Blackfoot.

As they stepped from the train, they saw the station on one side and a row of small houses made of logs on the other. Standing on the platform were a man holding a mail-sack and two other men wearing broad-brimmed hats, enormous fringed-leather trousers and small-heeled boots with great spurs. Not far from the platform stood a heavy spring-wagon to which were hitched two bay horses, either very nervous or else half broken, for they were rearing and plunging, and shying away from the train.

"Do look at those animals, Hilder," said

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Ena; "they will certainly get away from that man."

"No, they won't; see, the driver has them under perfect control."

As the girls stood gazing, as if spellbound, the man let his team go, and, turning at right angles, they bolted over the flat, the wagon bumping and bouncing over the sage-brush in a way fearful to contemplate.

"I wonder if that is the way all the men drive in this part of the country," remarked Hilder. "If it is, I will be afraid to enter the stage."

"No, miss, begging your pardon," answered an old man, touching his hat; "it be only them what wants to show off that will drive their cayuses in that style."

"Thank you, that is certainly reassuring," replied Hilder, then turning to Ena, she said:

"Where can that stage-agent be? Mr. Drisco promised he would be here to meet us."

"There comes a gentleman; perhaps it is he," answered Ena.

"Pardon me, ladies, if I have kept you waiting. My name is Rushton; I am the Blackfoot stage-agent, and you, I presume, are Mrs. Drisco's sisters from the South."

"Yes, and we were beginning to think

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you had forgotten us," said Ena.

"Not at all, ladies, not at all. An unavoidable detention caused the delay, and now I am ready to pilot you to the best hotel our small town affords;" so saying, he picked up their valise and preceded them to the place indicated. After presenting them to the landlord, he turned to them, saying smilingly:

"The stage leaves precisely at six o'clock to-morrow morning, young ladies, so don't let our pure mountain air affect you with drowsiness, and miss it." With this injunction, he left them.

"My, what a talkative man," observed Hilder. "If he is a sample of Westerners, we will be highly entertained."

"I don't fancy him at all," answered Ena; "he's entirely too presuming."

"Why, no, dear, he only wished to be agreeable," laughingly said her sister.

CHAPTER II

THE STAGE-RIDE

PROMPTLY at the appointed time, the rickety coach, drawn by four Western cayuse ponies, stopped at the hotel-porch, and the girls climbed in. The driver mounted to his elevated seat in front, and, cracking his long whip, started the horses on a lope.

The road itself was good; but on either side, for miles, stretched what was called the lava beds. Great towers of rock upheaved in all sorts of fantastic shapes. This was highly interesting to the girls and they enjoyed it. At five o'clock that afternoon, the stage stopped at the first station, there to remain all night. The place was kept by a pleasant woman and her two daughters. When the girls retired to their room, Ena said:

"Didn't that supper taste good?"

"It certainly did," answered her sister. "If all of the places along the road are like this, we'll fare very nicely."

"But, Hilder, did you notice that stage-driver wash himself right before us in the

The Stage-Ride

dining-room? I didn't think that was nice at all; he should have gone to the bedroom."

"Maybe that is Western style, Ena," laughed Hilder. "I guess we'll see many things which will strike us as being peculiar."

Next day the ride was even more interesting, for, here and there over the level valley, could be seen little log houses with flat dirt roofs, the sight of which struck the Southern travelers as being very odd and comical—also barns and corrals. Even at this season of the year, the valleys, as well as the mountains, were covered with snow, which to the girls was a most beautiful sight.

But, alas for their night's accommodations! The stage stopped before a log cabin, where, as the girls alighted, they saw half a dozen children, all with dirty faces and uncombed hair, staring at them as only country urchins can. The girls were tired, and, as they thought, hungry; but, when they entered the house and saw the condition of the place, they were disheartened. There were but two rooms in the cabin, one they were to occupy, while the family slept, ate, and cooked in the other.

When supper was announced and the girls took their seats at the table, everything looked

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uninviting. The eggs were heaped in a pile on a plate, the potatoes were black, and other things corresponded. They made a pretense of eating, then, excusing themselves, they went off to their room, where they discussed this part of Western living.

Next day the stage-driver told them that the people who kept this station had just moved there and that they were not likely to hold the position long.

"Can you realize, Ena," said Hilder, "that at three o'clock to-day, we will have traveled one hundred and fifty miles in this stage?"

"It does not seem possible, for, of all the journey, we dreaded this the most, nearly making ourselves sick over the prospect."

"Yes, it was always that awful stage-ride, and we have really enjoyed it. In this case, the anticipation was worse than the realization," added Hilder.

"How far is that bridge we are to stop at, from Challis?" asked Ena of the driver.

"Five miles, miss, and you will have about five more to ride with Mr. Drisco. You know the Springs are on this side of Salmon River and I have to cross the bridge to get to Challis."

"Thank you kindly for the information."

The Stage-Ride

“Not at all, miss; ask whatever you please, for I’ve been driving this stage for many a year and know the country perfectly.”

They rode on for a few miles, when suddenly Hilder cried:

“Can you tell us the meaning of those horsemen coming at breakneck speed?”

“Yes, they are three masked men, who mean some dirty work,” answered the driver. “But you both keep still; they won’t harm you. It’s the express they’re after. If they were not coming from the direction we are traveling, I could outrun them; but, as it is, we must meet.”

“Good gracious, do you think they’ll kill us, Hilder?” whispered Ena, clinging to her sister’s arm.

“The driver assures us not, but we’ll have to run our chances,” replied Hilder.

“Halt!”

The girls heard the word in fear and trembling.

“By whose authority, you d——n rascals?” asked the driver.

“This, my man,” said one of the trio, pointing a loaded revolver at him.

Looking down its shining barrel, the man knew that resistance was useless; but he asked:

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"What's your business?"

"Step off your perch and we'll soon show you," said the man with the revolver, who seemed to be the leader.

"Here, Mike, you hold the horses," he continued, "while Jack examines the mail-sacks; meanwhile I'll cover our man here with this shining metal," laughingly holding up his revolver.

When everything of value had been extracted from the bags, the man stepped to the door of the stage.

"Ah, my pretties, are you scared?"

"Here, take our purse and get away," cried Hilder, thrusting it toward him.

"I don't want your dough, my sweetie; it's a kiss I'll have from those lovely lips."

As he caught the girl in his arms, she fainted.

"You have killed my sister!" cried Ena, bursting into tears.

"For God's sake, call that devil away from there, if you have one spark of human feeling!" roared the angry stage-driver.

"Jack, you fool, let those girls alone and let's get away from here; we may be caught."

The man, thinking that really he had committed the crime of murder, hastily gathered

The Stage-Ride

the booty they had procured and jumped on his horse.

"Now you may resume your seat of honor," said the man who held the revolver.

This the driver did; at the same time, the man at the horses' heads let them go and the stage rattled away. Stopping at a short distance, however, the driver asked if the girls were all right.

"Yes," answered Ena, "my sister only fainted, and, as we had some water, I bathed her face, after which she revived. What an awful experience we've had!"

"Yes, miss, I've been on this road for fifteen years and this is the first hold-up I've ever had. Awfully sorry it should have occurred while you ladies were aboard, it will give you a bad opinion of the West."

"It will certainly make us uneasy regarding stage-riding."

"This may never happen again, so I would make my mind easy, if I were you," said the driver.

"Don't give us that advice now, please," returned Hilder, with a ghost of a smile; "for we both are trembling as if we had the ague."

"That will pass off soon," assured the man.

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But it did not; the two frightened girls sat holding each other's hands and talking of what they had passed, through the long, dreary hours, until at last the stage rounded a small promontory and there, in full view, was the Salmon River.

CHAPTER III

A JOYOUS REUNION

THE SCENE that burst on them was one to gladden the most disturbed, for, standing like white mounds, were great blocks of ice, beneath which flowed, at rapid pace, the bluish-green waters of the river.

"See," said the driver, "we cross that bridge and there stands Mr. Drisco's light rig. I suppose he is in that house you see there."

The noise of the stage was heard by the man himself, and, stepping up to it, he assisted them to alight.

"Well, girls, I'm ever so glad to see you, but what has happened? You both look so pale," said Mr. Drisco, in alarm.

"We have good cause for the state of our appearance, Herbert," answered Hilder.

"You tell him about it," she said, turning to the driver.

After the recital, Mr. Drisco remarked:

"That's certainly singular; it has been years since that game has been played. Sam,

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do you think you could identify them?"

"I would be certain of one, if ever I cast my peepers on him; he had a scar under his right ear, which I noticed particularly, and a halt in his speech."

"He's the one who covered you, I suppose," laughed Mr. Drisco. "You had a fine chance to observe him."

"Yes, that's the chap," answered the driver.

"With that pistol before your face," said Ena, "I don't see how you could notice scars or anything else."

"I wasn't afraid, miss, so long as he didn't pull the trigger," answered the man, with a smile.

"And if he had," said Mr. Drisco, "there would have been no cause for fear, as you would have been a dead man."

"O please don't talk of that dreadful affair," pleaded Hilder. "I'm not over the trembles yet."

"Well, I'm glad," said the driver, as he started the horses, "that we escaped with our lives."

As the stage drove away, Mr. Drisco said, as he helped the girls into the wagon, and started off:

A Joyous Reunion

“Those robbers will certainly be caught, for Sam will no sooner have told it in Challis, than the sheriff, with a posse of men, will be after them.”

“I do hope they will be caught and sent to the pen for the rest of their lives,” declared Hilder.

“I don’t blame you for being down on them,” answered Herbert; “they will deserve all they get.”

“In all this excitement we have forgotten to ask for Fanny and the children,” said Ena.

“They are well, thanks, and Fanny is all impatience to see you both. I could hardly persuade her to remain at home. If this team could have been trusted, I would have let her come for you.”

“As much as we would like to see Fanny, I know we will feel safer with you holding the ribbons,” answered Hilder.

“We saw an exhibition at Blackfoot, as to how your Western horses can act,” laughed Ena, and she related the circumstance.

“O you will see plenty of that before you are here long,” answered her brother-in-law.

The fresh mountain air, blowing in their faces, had an invigorating effect on the girls, and the span of grays that Herbert was

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driving fairly flew along the smooth road, which lay along a level stretch of sage-brush land. Only a few ranches had, at this time, been taken up, owing to the scarcity of water. They passed the little country schoolhouse, made of unhewn logs and a flat dirt-roof, finally coming to the big gate, which was the entrance to Herbert Drisco's premises.

"Here we are, girls, safe and sound, after all your varied experiences," announced their brother-in-law. "This road leads up to the house."

"Does it?" said Hilder. "We are so glad, for now we'll soon see Fanny and the children."

"That road looks really dangerous, Herbert, with those great towering rocks above it and that marshy ground on the other side."

"Well, Ena, we have never been hurt by either one or the other; so why worry?" he said.

"Why, indeed," she laughingly answered.

They had reached a bridge that crossed a beautiful stream, and rode up to the house.

"Mamma, Mamma," called Richie, "here comes Auntie and Papa. Quick, let's go and see them;" and, taking his little sister by the hand, he ran out into the yard followed in great haste by their mother.

A Joyous Reunion

"You blessed young ones," cried Ena, snatching first one and then the other up and kissing them fondly, "and O Fan!" In a moment, the two sisters were clasped in a silent embrace. Hilder was no less demonstrative, and it was a joyous reunion.

"Say, I feel hurt," remonstrated their brother-in-law.

"Why, Herbert?" asked Hilder, in surprise.

"You never greeted me in any such manner as this."

"Well, you know, dear brother," said Ena, with a merry twinkle in her eyes, "the only reason we didn't was because we were too much exercised over what had happened."

"Yes, that's a fine way to turn it off," he answered. "I admire your inventive powers."

"Did you have an accident on the road?" asked Fanny.

"A very bad one," explained Hilder, and she commenced relating the hold-up to her sister.

"You had better let me finish that narrative," said Ena; "you might grow embarrassed, and it's the part that Herbert didn't hear."

Hilder's face reddened as she answered: "That horrid wretch; yes, Ena, you tell it."

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Tears filled Fanny's eyes at the terrible ordeal her sisters had passed through; but she expressed her thankfulness that they escaped unharmed. After supper the sisters sat in Fanny's room and conversed until far into the night.

CHAPTER IV

AN AGREEABLE MEETING

NEXT morning, Hilder and Ena, accompanied by Mrs. Drisco, walked out to survey their surroundings. Fanny's home was surely beautiful. There was a large, two-story main building and, off a short distance, were some picturesque log cabins. Across the grassy lawn could be seen the bath-houses, while in the distance was a duck-pond, whose smooth surface was covered by those beautiful fowls swimming and scurrying to and fro.

Directly behind the house rose high mountains, not of dull gray stone of somber hue, but of many-colored rock, which, when the last rays of the setting sun fell on them, gave back a reflected glory really radiant. As the party passed along, the girls noticed a number of men going in different directions, some with fishing-tackle, others with guns on their shoulders, while some were on the lawn playing croquet; and, what seemed really mortifying, they pretended to be perfectly oblivious of their presence.

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"Well, Fanny, your boarders seem to be enjoying themselves, and where do they all come from?" asked Ena.

"Most of them are miners, who come here for a rest, and to get a change of diet. I give them plenty of chicken, eggs, and milk—things they can't get at the mines."

"If you have this many all the time, you must do a thriving business," remarked Hilder.

"We are never without some; but your coming has been spoken of and they have come to see what the Southern girls look like."

"They don't seem very much interested in us, judging by their actions," said Ena.

"Don't you think that," laughed Fanny. "They have sized you up out of the corner of their eye, and, if the truth were known, they have all passed a mental judgment on you both. But come and I will introduce you to those who are on the lawn, and then I shall have to leave you."

Soon the girls were laughing and talking and playing croquet with the men, as if they had been acquainted all their lives.

"You must have Mr. Drisco bring you to visit the mines at Bayhorse, Miss Hilder," spoke up one of the men, whose name was

An Agreeable Meeting

Sonoby Lindsley. "Most of the men who patronize the Springs are from there. Our town is very small, but we have some large mines in its vicinity, which, I am sure, will interest you."

"Yes, Herbert has promised to show us around the country, so I suppose he included the mines. Rock has great attraction for me, although I don't know much about it."

"O you will soon learn, for we will take particular pains to explain the different formations to you."

"That is very kind surely; but do look there, that gentleman has caught a string of lovely fish. Now that is what I call sport!" Hilder exclaimed.

"Say, Bill, where did you make that haul?" asked one of the men. "I needn't ask, though, for you have been gone too short a time to have used a hook and line."

"Well, how did he catch them? With a seine or cast net?" inquired Ena, innocently.

The men couldn't suppress a smile, as this Southern girl asked the question; for they could not imagine hauling a seine in the Salmon River, or casting a net with the current it possessed. They were very considerate, however, as one of them answered:

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"No, Miss Ena, we use what is called giant powder, which, when lit and thrown into a hole where a lot of fish are collected, goes off and kills them."

"But that ought not to be allowed," protested the girl, indignantly; "it must kill all the small fish as well as the larger ones."

"I must confess, Miss Ena," said Walter Aldrich, "that the law does not countenance such actions; but sometimes we evade its iron arm and it is such an easy way to get them. It is dangerous, too; a person has to be very careful and know just how to handle it. Not long ago, a man, who was staying here at the Springs, had his arm blown off attempting to get some fish."

"O how dreadful! I hope you gentlemen will never use it again," said Ena.

This remark caused them to smile a second time; for how were they to work in the mines without the aid of giant powder? Surely this girl had much to learn regarding the West. As twelve o'clock drew near, the gong sounded for the noonday meal and the sight of so many men emerging from different directions and hastening to its call, amused the girls greatly. Mrs. Drisco asked them to wait on the table, which they did, being much confused at first,



The girls found the upward climb somewhat arduous.

An Agreeable Meeting

however; but confidence gradually returning, they performed the duty easily and deftly.

"Do you young ladies feel equal to the task of mountain climbing, this afternoon?" asked Mr. Lindsley.

"Certainly we do," answered Hilder. "We were just discussing the advisability of trying it alone."

"How selfish!" exclaimed Walter Aldrich, who, having accompanied his friend, overheard the remark, "and you would not even give us a chance of refusing."

"That you would not have done," laughed Ena, "if just for politeness sake; but the real fact of the case is, we never gave you a thought at all."

"A harder thrust than ever, Miss Ena," he answered; "but now matters are adjusted by our inviting you both to accompany us."

The girls found the upward climb somewhat arduous and many times were obliged to rest and take breath; but they laughingly continued. Sometimes the way was steep and the small rocks slipping from beneath their feet would have again carried them backward, had it not been for the timely aid of their escorts. When at last they gained the summit and were comfortably seated on a large

In the Mountain's Shadow

boulder, Hilder remarked:

"It is fortunate for us, Ena, that we did not attempt this trip by ourselves; for I am afraid we never should have accomplished it, as one step forward meant several steps backward."

"And what a horrible thing failure would have been," Ena answered. "I shudder to think of it."

"Why, it would only have been a case of try, try again, Miss Ena," observed Mr. Lindsley. "You would soon learn to steady yourself in the slide rock."

"Now don't spoil the credit due you both," demurred Hilder, "by talking in that manner; for we certainly would have been in a predicament without your assistance."

"As you will, Miss Hilder," answered Mr. Lindsley; "henceforward we will consider ourselves heroes," and he bowed most profoundly.

"Do," she said laughingly; then her gaze wandered over the inspiring and picturesque landscape.

"Your experience in climbing the mountain-side reminds me of my first attempt at snow-shoeing," remarked Mr. Aldrich. "If you wish, I will relate it."

An Agreeable Meeting

"We are all attention," said Ena, with a smiling look toward Hilder.

The meaning of that glance had to be explained before the man would continue; so Ena told them of their mistake when at St. Louis.

"Have you ever seen snow-shoes, Miss Ena?" asked Mr. Aldrich.

"No; what do they look like?"

"They are about six or seven feet long, some four inches wide, and are made of very thin, strong, seasoned wood half an inch thick, running to a point in front, the toes turning up, for otherwise they would catch the snow. One stands in the middle, inserting the foot in a strap, which closes round the instep. Then you slide along the surface of the snow as best you can, at first very awkwardly indeed. It takes a long time to learn to manage them."

"Now for your story, Mr. Aldrich," said Hilder.

"It was my first winter West, and the mine where I was working was situated at the top of a very high mountain, which you had to descend on snow-shoes to reach the town. Being a novice in that line, a friend of mine undertook to teach me the art; so one evening

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we started out. I put on the shoes and went about fifteen yards in safety, when, suddenly, a small tree confronted me. I knew of no way to evade it, so I tried to guide myself away from it and lo! one snow-shoe went to the right, the other to the left, and I found myself straddling the trunk. I looked around for help; but I was so disgusted at my friend's lack of feeling, for he was laughing heartily, that I determined to get out of my trouble as best I could. I tried to back from the tree, and, in so doing, the heel ends of the shoes crossed and I sat down very suddenly."

"You must have presented a very comical sight," interrupted Ena; "you ought not to have blamed your friend for his mirth."

"I did then, for I thought it most unkind; but I have long since forgiven him, for many's the time I have seen others in the same fix, and found how next to impossible it is to keep from laughing. But to continue, my friend gained my side, and, after assisting me to get up, he said:

"Now watch me and see how it is done."

"He poised himself upon the top of the hill, like a bird about to take wing. The toes of his shoes were over the edge, and, in an instant, he was in full flight.

An Agreeable Meeting

“‘How easy it looks!’ I said, so I determined to follow him. I went all right for a short distance, then something happened. My shoes crossed, and, for an instant, I felt like a spinning-wheel, going head over heels three or four times, then taking a header into the snow.

“I thought I would never get out of it, but finally I did, with the snow in my mouth, ears, eyes, and nostrils. Even my pockets and boots were full; it had crept down my neck and collar, and my head was white with it. When I looked around, I perceived my friend in convulsive laughter.

“‘You think it awfully funny to be buried alive in wet snow,’ I said wrathfully.

“‘Never mind, partner,’ he said good-naturedly. ‘I’ve been there myself, I know just how it feels. Your only revenge now will be in some one else’s misery. But, really, you did look so queer coming out of the hillside in a kind of volcanic eruption, that I couldn’t help but enjoy the sight.’”

“Well, after that terrible experience, did you learn to snow-shoe?” asked Hilder.

“I can answer for him, Miss Hilder,” broke in Mr. Lindsley; “he is one of the best at the mine.”

In the Mountain's Shadow

"So there is hope of our becoming expert climbers, Hilder," laughingly said Ena. "Thanks, Mr. Aldrich, for so much encouragement."

"You're entirely welcome, Miss Ena."

"I think," said she, "it's time to return." All acquiescing, the party left for home.

CHAPTER V

CHALLIS

A FEW days after the girls' arrival, Mr. Drisco suggested:

"I am going to Challis this morning. Would you both like to accompany me?"

"Indeed we would, and glad of the chance," answered Hilder.

"Get ready then and be sure to wrap up warm, for, although the sun is shining now, old Sol is tricky and may hide his face before we reach home and we be caught in a shower."

When seated in the wagon, the girls noticed Mr. Drisco turn the horses' heads toward the road by which they first came, and Hilder said:

"Herbert, why don't you cross the river? It seems so much shorter way; for we can see the town from the upper porch and it is in a direct line from here."

"The longest way round is sometimes the safest way after all, Hilder. I know it is so now; for the Salmon River is rising and past fording; besides, this way you will see con-

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siderable of the country."

"I am delighted," said Ena, "for I do love to ride."

Her brother-in-law smiled at her, for she, of the two girls, was his favorite. In fact, Ena Graham was born to be loved. She was altogether bewitching, with that peculiar charm which belongs to certain women, a magnetic quality not dependent on faultlessness of physical beauty for its existence, but something beguiling and upsetting, especially to the masculine sense, which seems to emanate from the whole person.

There are women who have a singular power to fascinate almost every man they meet. Every woman whose name has come down through the ages, with a glamour of magic about it, so that the very sound of it makes the blood pulse quickly, must have possessed that strange power. Certain it is that Ena Graham possessed it in no small degree. She was not particularly beautiful, but bright looking, with a sort of morning clearness about her face. Her figure was slight, but delicately rounded, with delightful little touches of individuality about it. Her hair was fair, with golden tints and ruddy shadows through it. Her complexion was also fair,

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with a tinge of red in her cheeks; her nose was small, but well shaped; her eyes were violet blue.

Hilder Graham was tall, with a fine, supple figure, and stately carriage. She had a well-set head and a pure oval face, with complexion even in tone and delicate in texture. Her eyes were of the darkest brown; her hair was black.

Now as the light wagon rolled merrily along, the girls' cheeks flushed and their eyes sparkled, as the fresh breeze fanned their faces, and their brother-in-law thought he'd be quite proud to present them to his numerous friends in Challis.

"You have such fine roads in this part of the country, Herbert," said Hilder. "Are all mountain roads like this?"

"The majority of them are, Hilder. They are one of the things we can boast of."

"And mountain scenery is another. Look, for instance, at that rocky wall whose height must be all of two hundred feet. What a feeling of awe possesses you, as you pass under its shadow! See, Hilder," she continued, "that large bird flying from yonder rocky point; it must have a nest there. Look how gracefully it skims through the air. Now

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it is coming back and circling round the point. What kind of a bird is it, Herbert?"

"Why, that's the emblem of our country, Ena. Don't you recognize it?"

"Not at such a long range, Herbert; but I know now it must be an eagle. How beautiful it is!"

"Yes," said her brother-in-law, "but very fierce. They always build their nests on high, rocky promontories like that, as a protection for their young."

As they continued their journey, with the rocky wall on one side and the level valley on the other, with here and there a log ranch-house to break the monotony, and occasionally a glimpse of the rushing Salmon River where its banks were low, the girls thought it all very charming. They had been riding along in silence for some time, when suddenly Hilder said:

"Herbert, I have been looking around in every direction and we seem to be completely surrounded by mountains, as if there were no exit whatever, except over the top of them."

"That is why this place is called Round Valley, Hilder, and the only way out is over the high divides. All this must seem very strange and startling to you both."

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"Intensely so," Hilder answered, "but interesting and enjoyable."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, for it would distress me to know you were pining for your Southern home."

"No, we are very well contented with the change. Aren't we, Ena?"

"Indeed yes. I do so love the mountains, and it is so jolly for us all to be together."

"Well, as every one is satisfied, we ought to have a good time," laughed Herbert.

As the girls entered the town of Challis, they were charmed with its situation, nestled at the foot of the lofty mountains, through which ran a dashing, sparkling creek on whose banks grew willows and tall, stately cottonwoods just bursting into bud. A number of neat and pretty houses were to be seen, also some stores, saloons, and a meat market.

The most imposing building was a large hotel, to which Mr. Drisco took the girls while he attended to his business. They were entertained by the landlady, with a good deal of Challis history, which they enjoyed hearing. On Herbert's return they had dinner, then left for home.

"How did Challis get its name, Herbert?" asked Hilder.

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“It was somewhere in the early '70's that a cattle man by that name wintered in this valley about three miles northwest of here. He and his partner were camped with their cattle near the river. When out riding one day, he ran across this location, where there was very little snow. He noticed it was protected by the surrounding mountains from the cold, fierce winds; so, thinking it a very suitable place to live, he built himself a cabin. Soon after, gold was found in the vicinity and others came. It grew to be a town, and, in honor of this first settler, the place was called Challis.”

“Well, he certainly found a lovely spot,” said Ena.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

ON THEIR arrival home, the girls found their sister had company, whom she introduced as Mrs. Pettibone and her daughter, Rosabelle.

"Pleased to meet you, girls," said the visitor. "I he'd tell of you long afore you come, from your sister, so I feels as if I be very much acquainted with you already. Now, how do you like this country?"

"We are charmed with it," answered Hilder, "and we have had such a delightful ride to your little town of Challis."

"Pretty little place, ain't it? Don't much compare, though, with your city of New Orleans."

"No, it is not quite so large," laughed Hilder.

"I was just telling Mrs. Drisco about what a queer person Mrs. Abe Cummings be, as you come in. It seems, just afore her baby was born, she went out in the orchard and tied a rope about her neck and told Abe if he didn't deed over his ranch to her, she would

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hang herself; and what do you think Abe said? 'By goll, Sadie, you'll have to hang.'"

The comical way in which the old lady told this literally convulsed her hearers.

"Did Mrs. Cummings hang?" asked Mrs. Drisco.

"You bet she never, and she didn't have no intention of it neither. She only wanted to scare her husband into giving her the ranch."

"She ought to be careful how she does such things; it might have some effect upon her child," said Mrs. Drisco.

"Certainly so; as I told Alfred, that child is liable to die jest that way, if it lives long enough."

"O, did you hear," continued Mrs. Pettibone, "about Sara Jenkins' little girl nearly killing herself the other day?"

"Why, no. How did it happen?"

"Well, it seems that Mr. Jenkins—he is a terrible careless man anyhow—laid his pistol on the child's new playhouse what her ma had made her out of a large coffee-box, and she didn't want it there, so she pulled the pistol off and it fell on the floor and exploded. The bullet went clean through the child's clothes, setting them on fire. Her

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ma he'd the noise and run out, jest in time to put the fire out, or the child would have burnt to death."

"Oh, that was dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Drisco. "Wasn't it a wonder the child was not killed? What narrow escapes folks have sometimes! There is certainly an overruling Providence taking care of us."

"That's what I tells Alfred, but he ain't much on religion, Mrs. Drisco. My, I most forgot to tell you of the beautiful present Alfred has sent for to give me. You know I needed a carpet for my sitting-room floor awful bad, so my husband said I should have a brisle carpet and the brisles on it will be an inch high."

Mrs. Drisco could hardly keep from laughing outright when she saw the look on Hilder's face; but the former, having heard Mrs. Pettibone make such breaks before, only said:

"Yes; Brussels carpets are the cheapest in the end, for they last so much longer than any others."

"That is what my husband said. Well, really, we must be going, for I told Alfred we wouldn't stay long. Come, Rosabelle. Now, Mrs. Drisco, you must be sure and let the girls come and spend a while with us, and we

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will show them what real ranch life is like.

"You will come, now, won't you?" addressing Hilder.

"We certainly will avail ourselves of your kind invitation, Mrs. Pettibone."

After this reply, the guests got into their buggy and drove off.

"Who in the world are those people, Fanny?" laughed Hilder. "The girl is nice enough, but that funny old lady! Her education has been sadly neglected, from all appearances."

"She is a good-hearted old soul, Hilder," explained Fanny, "and she improves on acquaintance. The Pettibone family consists of four in number: father, mother, a brother who is considerably older than Rosabelle, and herself. They own a large ranch a few miles from here. Mr. Pettibone is a cattleman and the son is a regular bronco-buster and cow-puncher. Well—"

"Wait, Fanny, not so fast, please; what do those terms mean?" asked Ena. "Those words are not in my vocabulary."

"Nor your dictionary, either, I dare say," laughed Fanny. "The former means to tame wild horses, the latter to brand cattle."

"All right, now proceed," said her sister.

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“As I was about to say, the mother, as you see, is a very ordinary woman. Her people crossed the plains somewhere in the '60's in a covered wagon. I think she said there were five wagons filled with people who came West at the same time. She told me that every night they would make a circle with the wagons and put the horses in it, then light camp-fires and some of the men watch all night, for fear of Indians; but they had no trouble that way. Most of the people who came out with them went to Utah, but they settled here in Idaho.

“Well, they took up a ranch and accumulated a number of cattle. Mr. Pettibone comes of a fine family, who reside in New York; but he came West for his health and, hiring out to old Buckland—that is Mrs. Pettibone's father—to work on the ranch, fell in love with Lizzie Buckland, who, people tell me, was a very pretty girl, and married her. He then took up a homestead and by hard labor has made himself a rich man. When you visit them, you will find that the brother is very much like the mother. He would not attend school, so, in consequence, is very illiterate, while Rosabelle takes after the father and she has graduated from the

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high school at Boise City. So that is their history as far as I know."

"I wonder how it is, that, no matter how well educated and refined a man is, if he marries a woman beneath him, he will almost always fall to her level; it seems impossible to raise her to his. Now, I have noticed, on the other hand, that a woman can invariably raise a man," said Hilder.

"That's if he is not past redemption," replied Fanny; "but my opinion is, that a man does not care. He might try for a while, then give up, while a woman will persevere through long years with patience and endurance to finally gain her end if possible."

"That must be it," answered her sister.

"Well, Fanny," said Ena, "I have taken a decided liking to Rosabelle, and I think we will become fast friends."

"Ena, there is no one in this country I would rather you would make a companion of than Rosabelle. She is high-minded and good-principled, and, notwithstanding her maternal parent, her manners are perfect."

"So I perceived, Fan, before I had talked with her for any great while."

"Well, now, girls," said Fanny, "we shall

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have to rush things to get supper ready in time for the men; so away to the kitchen.”

CHAPTER VII

FANNY'S PROTÉGÉ

ONE morning as Hilder entered the kitchen, she saw there, seated on the floor by the stove, an old Buck Indian, with his striped blanket thrown around him and his long, straight, black hair down in his face, which he would try to push back. When he saw Hilder, he laughed in a silly way and pointed to the table.

"Is that a stray pet of yours, Fanny?" she asked her sister.

"O that is old Jim, the fisherman. He trades fish for 'muck-a-muck,' as he calls something to eat. I pay him a little besides. Wait and see how much victuals he can consume."

"He does not look as if he was exactly right in the head."

"He isn't, and the reason is, I have heard, that, at one time, he was supposed to have died. As he gave no evidence of life after a long period of sickness, the medicine men ordered his burial. While the squaw was

Fanny's Protégé

carrying out her part of the program, she was startled to observe the mound over Jim heave several times. She ran in terror to the Indians and gave the alarm. When they arrived at the spot, they found Jim had dug himself out; but the fright had unbalanced his mind. His squaw was afraid to live with him, and even the tribe drove him away, so the poor fellow sleeps in the woods and catches fish for a living."

"What an awful thing that must have been, Fan, to have awakened and found himself underground! The wonder is that he wasn't a raving maniac."

"No doubt but he would have been, had he had far to dig; but, fortunately for him, the Indians do not bury their dead very deep in the ground."

"His is a sad predicament to be in, but, Fanny, one cannot help laughing at him, he is so comical," said Hilder.

"He is always in the best of humor himself. Now watch him when I give him his breakfast.

"Here, Jim, you want something to eat?"

"Ha, ha, heap muck-a-muck, bueno (wyno) muck-a-muck, heap wyno."

"He certainly ought to appreciate the quantity, if not the quality or style. Can he

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eat all of that?" For Fanny had heaped a large platter full of victuals and given him a big bowl of coffee.

"Wait and see. He may ask for more coffee; he sometimes does."

Just then Ena entered the kitchen and Hilder rehearsed to her what Fanny had said, and both the girls christened Jim, Fanny's protégé.

A few days after this, Ena was working in the kitchen when old Jim made his appearance with a fine string of fish in one hand and a bundle in the other.

"Well, Jim, lots of fish," said Ena. "Want muck-a-muck?"

"Hump, no muck-a-muck, no good muck-a-muck," and he handed her the bundle.

On opening it, Ena found some bright calico and she was at a loss to know what the Indian did want, so she called Fanny to help her out.

"What's the matter, Jim?" asked Fanny. "Want to sell the fish?"

"No sell, this," and he threw off his blanket and displayed a ragged shirt. Catching hold of it, he pointed to the calico Ena held in her hand.

At this, Fanny began to laugh heartily.



“Well, Jim, lots of fish.”

Fanny's Protégé

"Now I know what he wants, Ena. He wishes to trade. You make him a shirt and he'll give you the fish."

"I won't do it, Fanny; I don't know how," objected the girl.

"Why, yes, you can; make it like the one he has on. Double over the cloth, cut a hole for the neck, sew up the side seams leaving a place for the sleeves, open it down the front, and put some buttons and button-holes and you have the shirt made."

"Well, I can do that;" so she made Jim understand she would make it for him.

She sat down to the machine and sewed it up, then finished it off, all in half an hour. When she brought it in, she felt well repaid, for Jim was delighted. What pleased him most were the buttons and button-holes. The old one had none on it and was always coming open. He had little ceremony as to where he made the exchange, hauling off the old one and putting on the new.

"Ha, ha, heap wyno! heap wyno," he said, as he executed a regular war-dance round and round the kitchen, pointing first at Ena, then at the shirt.

"He evidently seems pleased with your work. Ena." laughed Fanny and Hilder.

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“And I feel rewarded, first by the knowledge that I have done him a service, and second with that fine string of fish.”

The old Indian wrapped his blanket around him and started off, and the girls heard him chuckling to himself way down the road.

CHAPTER VIII

A VISIT TO BAYHORSE

“FANNY, Mr. Aldrich has asked us to take a trip to Bayhorse and visit the Ram’s Horn Mine with him and Mr. Lindsley. May we go?” asked Ena, one lovely June morning, as the three sisters were busily engaged in the kitchen; for Fanny did not keep any hired help. In this, she followed the custom of the country. Now, if these two Southern girls had foreseen what was in store for them in the way of cooking, washing dishes, and even washing clothes, I am afraid they would have shrunk from such an undertaking. It is certainly a wise Providence that veils our future from us, for, seen all at once, it might overpower us; but, as day follows day, we are given strength to battle with it and come out victorious in the end.

“Why, certainly, Ena,” she answered. “How does he propose going?”

“He said he would go to Challis on horseback and bring down a livery-stable team.”

“That’s very nice of him; but why not take

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our three-seated rig and let Herbert drive you? Then you could ask Rosabelle Pettibone to accompany you."

"That would be capital, Fan; but how will we get word to her?"

"Edward, the hired man, will be going up the valley this morning, and, on the way home, he can stop at their ranch and ask her."

"But had we not better consult the men as to this new arrangement?" suggested Hilder.

"O they will be agreeable," answered Ena, her eyes twinkling. "Anything will suit Sonoby Lindsley, as long as he has his Hilder by his side."

"Hush your nonsense, Ena," said Hilder, blushing furiously, "and go speak to them regarding it."

As Ena had surmised, the men were pleased with the arrangement, so two days afterward, they started on their trip.

The morning was glorious; the air was filled with perfume of wild flowers and the songs of birds. The fields were decked in their mantle of purple and green; for the alfalfa was budding forth, looking like a variegated carpet spread on the face of Nature.

After stopping at Mrs. Pettibone's for

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Rosabelle, who was awaiting them, they proceeded on their journey. Crossing the Salmon River Bridge, their road went up a steep incline, then along the mountain side and through a narrow canyon. The road was far above the river, and, as the girls looked down, down, they saw the water indulging in a sparkling race over large boulders, then splashing into deep pools with a mighty rush and roar.

"What a treacherous stream!" exclaimed Ena, "and how swiftly it flows! Has any one ever attempted to navigate a skiff on its surface?"

"I know of two men who went down the river, Miss Ena," said Walter Aldrich; "but I have never heard of any one having the courage to come up-stream."

"It does not seem to me that it took much bravery to go with the current," answered the girl. "Of course it was daring, I'll admit; but any one who is used to the water would only think it fun to steer clear of those rocks."

"That's all very well, Ena," said her brother-in-law, "but you called it, a few moments ago, treacherous, and I see you really did not weigh your meaning. Now, that river is full of eddies, and, should a boat

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come in contact with one of these, it would certainly be sucked down and no human hand could save it. Do you see, my little sister?"

"I acknowledge myself worsted, Herbert—a predicament most people find themselves in when they talk about something they do not fully understand."

"Yes, that's even so, Miss Ena," put in Mr. Lindsley; "we are all liable to be caught just that way."

Ena gave him a pleasant smile, then said:

"Rosabelle, have you ever been to Bay-horse?"

"Yes, I've been through the town on horse-back with John, my brother. We were driving some cattle. We passed within a short distance of the Skylark Mine. I have never been into a mine, though."

"It was you, then, that we miners were craning our necks to see," laughed Walter Aldrich. "We got up a bet among ourselves as to who it might be; but, suffice it to say, none of us won the wager."

"How could you see me when you were working in the mine?" she asked.

"Well, you see, Miss Rosabelle, a lady is such a rare sight to us poor fellows, that,

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when we saw you, we gave a cheer, which meant that one was near; then drill and hammer were dropped and we rushed to look."

"My! what a commotion you did create, Rosabelle," exclaimed Ena. "I wish I had been near with my kodak. What a picture you all would have made, Mr. Aldrich."

"Yes, a picture to have excited the ridicule of your Southern friends to whom you would have sent it, Miss Ena," answered Walter Aldrich. "No, we would not have enjoyed being caught at such a disadvantage."

"How sensitive you miners are!" retorted Ena. "I shall remember in the future."

Thus the party kept up an animated conversation until reaching the small town of Bayhorse. Here the girls were impressed with the rugged beauty of the scene; tall mountains lifting their snow-capped tops in eternal majesty against the gorgeous blue of heaven, endless vistas of rolling hills enrobed in dark green pines. But, as they proceeded up the narrow street, on either side of which a few scattering log houses dotted the mountain side and almost reached the bank of the surging stream, their lofty thoughts suddenly fell to the level. Ena began laughing softly, as the wagon rattled along the rocky road,

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when her companion, perceiving it, said:

"What is amusing you, Miss Ena, if I may ask?"

"Why, certainly; it seems to me that, from every window of each of those houses, can be seen a head, and it reminds me of the circus, when the beasts poke their heads from between the bars, and the injunction written below, 'Don't tease the animals.' I was thinking how aptly it fitted this case."

"You are incorrigible, Ena," laughed Rosabelle, who had been listening. "Don't you agree with me, Mr. Aldrich?"

"Really, I do, and, after such thoughts as those, I would not dare ask her opinion of me."

"You do well not to. But see, Herbert is driving up to that store porch and there is a gentleman on it awaiting us. Are you acquainted with him, Mr. Aldrich?"

"Yes, it is Mr. Arthur Griscom, one of the partners in the store."

As this reply was being made, the wagon stopped and the men jumped out to assist the young women to alight. As the party walked up the steps, Mr. Griscom stepped forward, saying:

"How are you, Drisco? I see you have

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brought a live cargo with you this time. My! it is good to see so many young ladies in Bayhorse."

"Good for sore eyes, is it, Griscom?" answered Herbert. "Well, come and I will present you."

After the introduction, Mr. Griscom said:

"Walk into the store, ladies, and make yourselves comfortable; for I imagine you are fatigued after riding so far."

"Let me correct that erroneous idea, Mr. Griscom," objected Ena, laughingly: "our party was so very entertaining that we were indeed surprised when we reached our destination."

"The doubt is forever erased from my mind, now that you have spoken, Miss Ena," answered Mr. Griscom, gallantly.

"Well, how are things progressing here?" asked Mr. Drisco.

"Fine, I assure you; the mines never looked better and everything is in a flourishing condition."

"Glad to hear it, for that means extra patronage for Drisco Springs," said Herbert.

"So it does, now more than ever, as there is an additional attraction," answered Mr. Griscom, his eyes seeking Ena's for an encourag-

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ing smile. But that young lady was not at all prepossessed in his favor and he received only a blank stare.

"O my, I wish he wouldn't be so personal," murmured Ena, disgustedly; "let's go to the hotel, Hilder."

This was said as Mr. Griscom was obliged to leave them and wait on a customer. His conversation had been directed almost entirely to Ena; she seemed to fascinate him from the first, so the girl had just cause for her objection.

"I see that the admiration is not mutual, Ena," laughed Hilder.

"If we don't go away from here, I shall really hate him," she said impulsively.

"Well, let's go before that happens," proposed her brother-in-law, who had overheard her last remark.

"Yes, please do," assented Ena. So Mr. Drisco arose, saying:

"Come girls, if you are ready, the boys and I will escort you to the hotel, where we will have supper and remain over night. Remember now, we must retire early, for we have a hard journey before us to-morrow. Accept many thanks, Griscom, for your kind hospitality."

"Don't mention it, Drisco, I only wish you

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would remain longer. Young ladies, I place the store at your disposal while you are visiting our town." His eyes were fastened on Ena as he spoke, so she was obliged to reply.

"We appreciate your kindness, Mr. Griscom;" she said this in such a dignified manner that the other girls left immediately for fear of laughing out loud.

"So you want us to retire early, Mr. Drisco," protested Sonoby Lindsley, laughingly. "Now, look here, I wonder if you would have taken that medicine a few years ago?"

"I call that tough, Lindsley, when I was only thinking of the girls' comfort."

"And our discomfort; but never mind, old fellow, you are only doing your duty as chaperon of this party; so we will forgive you."

"Is that so? Well, I feel as if I had thrown up an alligator. I'm so relieved," said Herbert.

The girls were obliged to laugh at this inelegant, though expressive, remark.

"Well, here we are at the hotel," announced Walter Aldrich. The party entered the sitting-room and soon supper was served, after which they spent a very enjoyable evening.

CHAPTER IX

A NARROW ESCAPE

WHEN the girls retired that night, they found their room large and well furnished, much better than they had expected for a mining-camp. The three of them occupied it, not wishing to be separated.

"Rosabelle, I wonder how such a pretty American woman could make up her mind to marry that Italian; she seems so far above him."

"Well, she ain't though, for she don't happen to be his wife. She is only living with him, and keeps the hotel. I have heard that she tends bar and gets intoxicated the same as he does."

"O what a pity for a woman to degrade herself in that manner! But, Rosabelle, I hear so much of that loose living here in the West. It makes me shudder; for we Southerners never associated with such characters at home. We held virtue above everything."

"Yes, Hilder, I have heard Mrs. Drisco tell mother the same thing; but here every

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one seems on the same footing and they intermingle."

"Well, one thing I have determined on, and that is to associate only with those who respect themselves."

"You girls had better stop gossiping and seek your humble couch, for I am dreadfully sleepy and you disturb me," said Ena.

"What a pity!" laughed Hilder. "Well, little sister, we won't be guilty of such inconsideration any longer, so we'll go to bed."

The girls awoke next morning refreshed, and ready for their day's pleasure. After breakfast, Mr. Aldrich met Ena and said:

"Will you ride with me in a buggy up to the mine?"

"Why, yes, if Herbert says I may."

"I have already gained his consent and the vehicle is in waiting. I was conceited enough to count on your acceptance."

"See, it's my only alternative now, no matter what I think of your assurance; for the rest of the party have started."

"Well, jump in and we'll overtake them, and head them off too, for they have stopped at the store."

"Where we will follow their example," said Ena, with a demure look.

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“Not if I know myself, Miss Ena; you are to belong to me exclusively to-day.”

Ena gave him one of her bewitching smiles and they started up the steep mountain road, that led to the mine. As they proceeded on their journey, Ena remarked, as her gaze wandered over the scene before her:

“For once in my life, I feel serious; as I look around on this grand panorama of nature, there seems something sublime and uplifting in the ruggedness of all this beauty, softened, as it is, in some instances into scenes more weird and strange than were ever portrayed by artist's brush. See, those mountains towering in eternal majesty, tranquil lakes that softly mirror surrounding loveliness, and sunlit skies; that mighty river, which rushes and roars down the rocky canyon, singing on in rhythmic cadence. There, on the mountain side, the snow is giving way beneath this genial sunshine, and the warm zephyr breezes coax the tiny wild flowers to bloom again.”

“You are exceedingly poetical this morning, Miss Ena,” said her companion.

“Yes,” she laughingly answered, “I don't often fall into that strain; but, somehow, I now feel in that particular humor.”

“Now, let us look at the practical side of

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the question; human nature, you know, needs something more than scenery to subsist on. When summer arrives here, in central Idaho, human nature asserts itself in diverse forms, and demands something more tangible than birds' songs, mountain scenery, balmy breezes, and crystal waters. Though, I confess they are all very well in their places. We demand something stronger than water—wrong I'll admit—(this was said in answer to a look of reproach depicted on Ena's countenance) and the braying of a mule has more meaning than the music of a bird. With the approaching warm weather, the soul yearns for a supply of bacon and beans, and a burro to saddle them onto, that we may go in search of nature's gleaming, golden treasures, wherewith to buy more bacon, beans, and booze, as well as divers other luxuries and delights of civilization."

"Well, that's good," said Ena, laughingly; "tell me some more of the delights of mining."

"By this time, all our energies are awakened with the desire for wealth. We rise up, scrape the moss off our backs, take a refreshing bath, change our socks, and then, robed in a blue flannel shirt, a brand new pair of overalls, bull-leather boots, a sombrero and

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six-shooter, we belabor our burros into action, saddle on the bacon, and, securing our utensils with a diamond hitch, we strike out for the hills, not forgetting, however, to take along a good supply of liquid inspiration. If we leave any friends behind us, they wave an affectionate farewell, saying:

“‘Good-by, Bill, I hope yer’ll strike it, and if yer git more than yer can ’tend to, send fer me.’

“Then away we go into the hills, to wrestle with the difficulties, and varmints and sich. A long silence follows after us, during which we keep on going, till finally the world hears from some of us and the news goes around the country like this:

“‘Did you hear about that galoot striking it on C—— gulch? Got it dead ter rights this time. Mule fell down the mountain side and kicked the top off’n a quartz ledge richer’n cream. Going to be a big stampede to that locality; nine barrels of whiskey already gone in. Fellows up town actually quit playing poker and hit the trail.’

“Well, Miss Ena, what do you think of the practical side?” asked Aldrich.

“I have enjoyed your description, but there must evidently be a great deal of hard

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labor attached to it."

"That don't count for much, if we only make a strike."

While listening to her companion, Ena was looking ahead, and, seeing a large ore team coming down the grade, she exclaimed:

"Look, Mr. Aldrich, there comes a wagon, and surely it can't pass us here?"

"That it cannot," he replied; "we must reach that turnout place as quickly as possible," and as he applied the whip to his horses, they started on a run. The two teams reached the spot at the same time. All would have been well, had not one of the horses in the ore team become frightened, and begun rearing and plunging.

"Oh, they will go over that bank!" screamed Hilder. The party in the hind wagon actually held their breaths as they saw the dreadful predicament of those in the buggy ahead of them.

"Courage, Miss Ena," whispered Walter Aldrich, as for the second time he tried to pass the plunging animal.

This time he succeeded, as, with a rush, they gained the other side. The party watching never knew what saved them from going down the steep side of the mountain; for the

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back wheel of the buggy was, for a moment, suspended in mid air. Ena heaved a sigh of relief when all danger was over.

"You behaved nobly, Miss Ena. I was so afraid you might scream, and, if you had, there would have been no salvation for us."

"I never utter a sound when I am frightened," she answered; "but we had a narrow escape. One thing, I had perfect confidence in the driver," and she turned her eager face and expressive eyes toward him and smiled.

He saw that smile in his mind's eye for months afterward, that maddening sparkle of joy, which flashed from her eyes to the very bottom of his heart, there to snuggle forever, with memory's most priceless treasures. Since their first meeting, Walter Aldrich found himself hopelessly, irretrievably in love with the fascinating girl by his side, but he dared not commit himself. What had he to offer a woman? He knew that he was her equal socially, yet he lacked the means to provide for her. But must he sit quietly and see some other man carry off the prize? The very thought was maddening. Burning words of love rose to his lips, which required his every effort to crush.

CHAPTER X

THE RAM'S HORN MINE

"ARE we not nearing one of the mines, Mr. Aldrich?"

"Why sure, that is the Skylark, Miss Ena. We are going still further up the mountain, to the Ram's Horn Mine."

The ascent was now somewhat difficult; so they proceeded slowly. Finally, on reaching the boarding-house, they were met by the superintendent, who gave them a hearty welcome.

"Now, folks, if you will just step into our sitting-room, in other words my office," said the superintendent, "we will have dinner presently, after which the gentlemen will initiate you into the mysteries of mining."

The girls thanked him, and an animated conversation was carried on, until dinner was served, which meal was enjoyed to the fullest extent. The party then went to inspect the mines. They were lowered in a cage, down a shaft to a depth of some sixty feet. There they struck a tunnel, through which the men

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took them. Here they saw the miners at work with drill and hammer, lighted by candles stuck in sharp-pointed sticks, which were driven into the rock. They stopped to watch one of them, and, as the measured strokes of his hammer struck the drill, it broke off big pieces of rock. It was here that Mr. Lindsley explained the use of giant powder.

On coming out of the mine, Hilder, looking up the mountain, said:

"Let's go to the top."

"Of course, if you wish it," answered her brother-in-law; "but you'll please excuse me, as I am not much on the climb."

"Well, Rosabelle, you go with us; we don't intend you shall miss it, even if your escort is so very ungallant," said Ena, laughingly.

"O pardon me, Rosabelle, I had quite forgotten you were my particular charge."

"Your excuse, Mr. Drisco," answered Rosabelle, smiling, "does not remedy matters a great deal."

"That's even so," remarked Hilder, "so we will leave before he puts his foot into it any deeper," for Herbert was about to reply again.

"Well, I will go; but remember, don't stay

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away too long, as we have our homeward journey to take."

In due time, the party reached the top. Here they were lost in the dazzling spectacle. Far in the distance were diamond-peaked snow-fields, striped, here and there, by a white, semi-transparent cloud floating across the top, hiding all but their summits and their base. From time to time, a lightning flash darted from this cloud and the reverberated echoes of the thunder peals resounded like long-drawn-out chords from these majestic organs of Nature's own workmanship.

"That thunder is warning us to descend, and that quickly," commented Mr. Lindsley; "for it is always a forerunner of storm."

"It is so grand up here that I hate to leave," protested Hilder, as she eagerly watched the scene before her.

"But it wouldn't look quite so grand in a downpour of rain," said her companion. "For the cold then would be exceedingly uncomfortable."

"I imagine so," she answered. "Let us descend at once."

As they picked their way down the mountain side, a mighty chasm suddenly confronted them. Where two rocky fragments,

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whose rugged surfaces seemed to correspond exactly, stood face to face, through this rocky chasm many feet below rushed with maddening force a mountain stream, disappearing among the thick woods that lined its banks.

"What a glorious sight these mountains are!" exclaimed Hilder. "Everywhere you turn, something new greets the eye."

"Yes," answered Mr. Lindsley; "even we miners love to look at Nature's handiwork, and appreciate it. See, how those rocks form flights of steps,—steps, though, which were never fashioned for the foot of man, for each of them is as high as a tower. Then glance in yonder direction: there to the west, behold those rocky boulders, piled one on top of the other, in such a way that, if the undermost block were disturbed, the whole of the enormous mass would take a different shape. Everything here indicates that the dominion of the world and of man ends. Not a single human habitation is visible from this dizzy height; even vegetation, you will perceive, is limited. On every side, bald rocks and gaping chasms meet the eye."

"It is with the deepest interest that I have listened to your poetical description, Mr. Lindsley, but particularly the latter part;

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for do you know that most of the men whom I have met here, do not hesitate to deny the existence of a Supreme Being, and it makes me shudder for them. To me, the belief in an all-powerful Creator is one of the greatest assurances and comforts of this life."

"I seldom air my belief, Miss Hilder; for the odds are against me, and I would bring down upon myself a shower of arguments that would almost annihilate me. But I tell you what it is, life out in a mining-camp tends to shake even the firmest faith."

"I can readily credit your assertion, Mr. Lindsley; but do give your belief a corner in your heart, for, many a time, it will be a safeguard in the hour of temptation."

"Such a remark is reassuring, Miss Hilder, and I shall endeavor to remember it. But here we are at the boarding-house and we are late. See, the others are awaiting us."

"It is high time for you to put in an appearance," said Mr. Drisco. "Night will overtake us now, before we reach Bayhorse; so hustle up girls, get your riggings on, and we will start."

Thanking the superintendent for his courtesy, they took their departure. Sure enough, night did overtake them, but, as the moon

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had risen and flooded the entire place with her soft and silvery light, the lateness of the hour did not disturb them. As the girls stood on the porch of the hotel, the men lingered, hoping that they would be invited to stay, if only for a while; but in this they were disappointed, for Ena said:

"Really, gentlemen, were we not so fatigued after our day's enjoyment, we would ask you to sit with us; but we know you will pardon us if we say good-night here."

"Certainly," answered Mr. Aldrich, "we were utterly selfish to even entertain such a thought, so come, Lindsley, let's be off."

"You are not going back to the mine to-night, are you?" asked Rosabelle.

"Why, yes, that's nothing of a walk," said Mr. Lindsley; "and by the way, young ladies, we will have to forego the pleasure of returning home with you; we are needed here."

The girls tendered their regrets and, with a cheery "Good night," they retired into the house.

Before leaving for home next day, Mr. Drisco wished to purchase some articles from the company store; so the girls went with him. Here they again met Mr. Griscom, who was

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exceedingly attentive, and presented them with a large box of candy,—“To console yourselves going home,” he said.

Mr. Griscom was pleasant to everybody; but his gaze would rest on Ena with a look in his eyes not to be misunderstood, which that young woman resented, and she was rejoiced when they left.

CHAPTER XI

RANCH LIFE

"Look, Fanny, there comes Rosabelle," announced Ena, as a buggy drove up and the young lady in question jumped out and tied her horse to the post.

"Why, I'm so glad you've come, for I was beginning to wonder what had become of you," welcomed Ena, as she hastened to meet her friend.

"Well, you see we are busy at this season of the year, and it keeps me very much at home; but give us an account of yourself. Why haven't you been to the ranch?"

"The truth is Fanny has had so many boarders that I hadn't the heart to leave her and Hilder."

"And why don't you add, miss, that you have been having such a glorious time that poor Rosabelle had escaped your thoughts altogether."

"It wouldn't do to tell all of one's thoughts," said Ena, laughingly; "but, dearie, it is not that bad. I have remembered you, and

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we've had a good time too. Last Wednesday we went on a fishing-excursion to Challis Creek, and we took our lunch and fishing-tackle along. A funny thing happened. Of course, I ought not to laugh; but poor Mr. Griscom did look so very ridiculous. You see, we were all fishing and my line happened to catch on a snag from which I could not disentangle it; so Mr. Griscom stepped out on a pole which was in the creek, and, just as he loosened the line, the pole turned and the poor fellow got a ducking. He looked so funny, Rosabelle, that it was all I could do to keep from laughing out loud."

"Why, Ena, weren't you ashamed, and he so gallant, too!"

"No, I wasn't. I do wish he would turn his attentions in some other direction; for, really, they are not appreciated by me, and what distresses me most of all is that he is so presuming."

"Why, has he presumed to propose?" asked Rosabelle, laughing.

"Indeed he has not. I've not given him a chance; but he is complacently waiting, for he feels sure I will bite at his golden bait. If he only knew it, his money has no attraction for me. I cannot endure the man."

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"Never mind, dear, you don't have to marry him, that's a comfort, so let's forget his existence and talk of something else; for instance, what brought me down here this lovely afternoon. I had a motive in coming, and it is this: Mamma is going to Challis to spend a few days with Mrs. Spencer, who is quite sick; so she told me to ask you to stay with me while she's gone. Will you come?"

"Certainly, for I want to see what ranch-life is like."

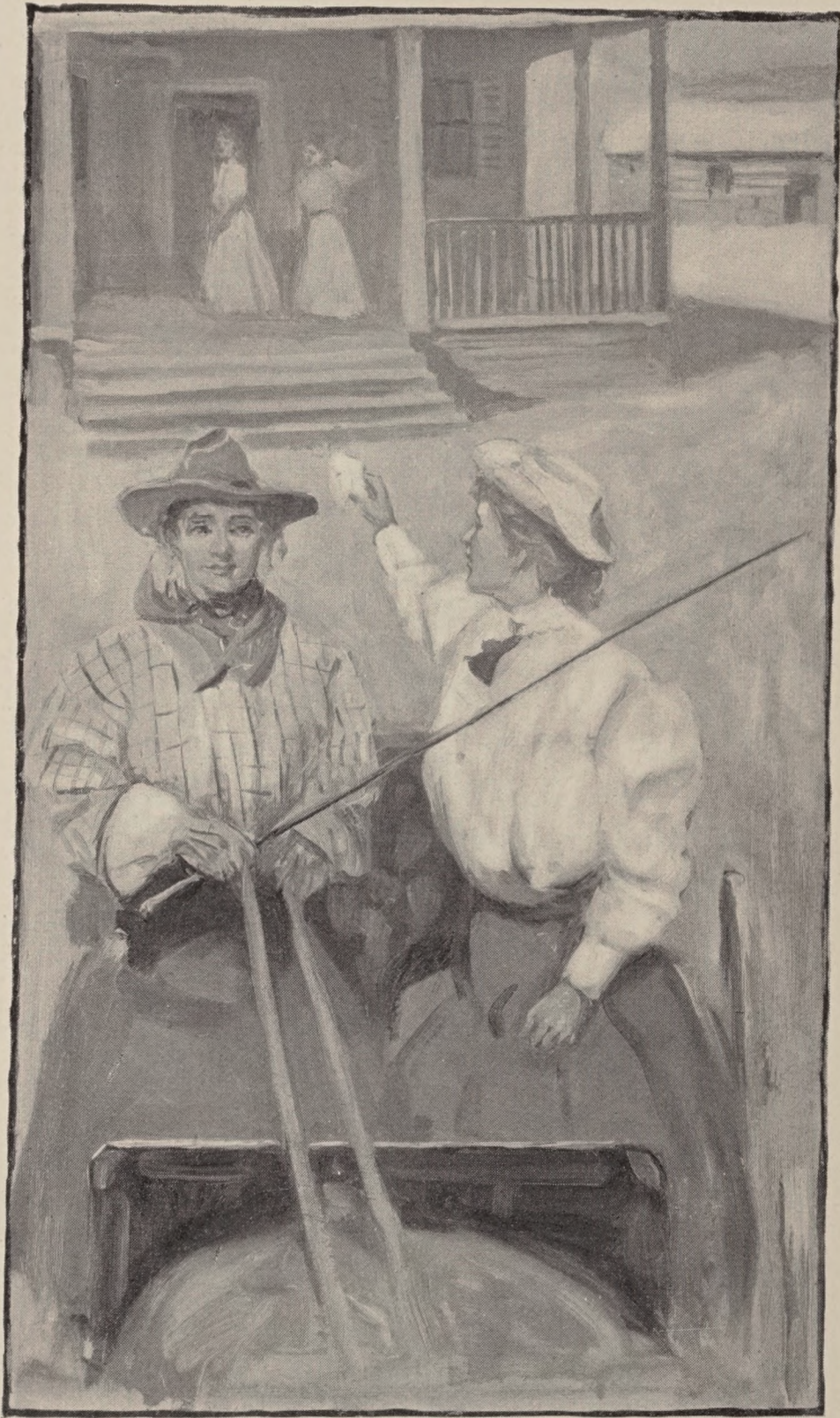
"Then get ready, for I must be back by five o'clock to cook supper."

"And I'll help you. How jolly, although I am not much in the culinary department; but I can pare the vegetables and set the table and such like."

"Hush," said Rosabelle, laughingly, "you don't know what accomplishments you have in that line, until you try. I mean to give you a chance to distinguish yourself."

"I pity those who will have to eat my first trial," laughed Ena, as she left the room to ask Fanny's permission to go.

In a short time, the two girls got into the buggy and drove off, and one, at least, of the young men who watched their departure, felt that all charms had vanished for him, so



The two girls got into the buggy and drove off.

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he determined to leave the Springs the next day. That was Mr. Aldrich.

Ena chattered gaily as she rode along the wild sage-brush road with her friend, never giving a thought to the possible heartaches she was leaving behind her.

"What beautiful sunsets you have in this Western country, Rosabelle. I have sat on the porch at the Springs and watched the sun sinking in a blaze of white light behind the far-off purple tint of the mountains. The valley here lay already in the dim shade. Only the high top of some barn caught the level rays and glared for a moment, like a house aflame. Then the sun dropped suddenly and the west grew pale, the dim shade crept up quickly, stealthily, over the mountain side and trees."

"Yes, Nature is portrayed here in all her phases, which are beautiful to contemplate," answered Rosabelle.

"Did you ever attend school in that little log building, Rosabelle? It would seem so queer to be taught in a place like that."

"Yes, I did, and many a good time I had there too. See that hill? Well, in the winter, when the snow was hard, we would coast down it."

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"O what fun! I never coasted in my life, but I should like to."

"You shall this winter, if there's snow enough; but you must be very careful at first or you will go so fast you'll land on your head. You have to first learn to steer the sled, then it will come easy for you."

"Are the winters very cold here, Rosabelle?"

"Sometimes we have it thirty below zero; but then we don't mind it much, for a person's blood thickens so in a climate like this that they don't feel the cold."

"O my, I shall freeze to death while mine is thickening," laughed Ena; "for I am such a cold body, anyhow."

"No, you won't; you'll get used to the weather and like it. Well, here we are, at the ranch. We will drive to the corral, as I don't see any of the boys."

"Any of the boys! Why, I thought you only had one brother."

"So I have; but some of the neighboring young men, whom we call cowboys, are here, and you can see them brand some cattle and break broncos, if you like."

"Won't that be fine! Then I can write South and astonish the folks with my startling descriptions."

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Rosabelle's brother, John Pettibone, met them at the corral gate, which he opened for them to pass through. His sister presented him to Ena, and the cut of the man was not at all to her fancy; for she saw before her, a tall, lanky young fellow, very homely to look upon, and so awkward—so different from his sister, thought Ena,—with a pair of queer blue trousers on, which she afterward found out were overalls, and a wide-brimmed hat. Nevertheless, she spoke pleasantly to him, which made him somewhat more at ease.

"I jest got home from taking Ma to Challis, Rosabelle, and I found Bill Davis and Tim Snyder he'er. They air going to help with them cattle and them two broncos, what we want to break."

"O what grammar!" thought Ena to herself, while Rosabelle's face flushed with annoyance, as she said:

"Well, John, I suppose they'll be here to supper, so we will hurry and get it ready."

"No rush about it, Rosabelle, you jest take your time; them fellows can wait jest as well as not."

"O dear!" said Rosabelle, as she and Ena were walking toward the house, "I am so ashamed of John sometimes; for he is sadly

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lacking in his education. He would not study and this is the consequence. He might have done better had not Mamma taken his part and said he didn't need any 'book larning,' as she expressed it. She didn't have any and she got along just as well without it, and the mistakes she makes sometimes are dreadful; but I suppose you have noticed them by this time," and Rosabelle's bright eyes filled with tears.

"Never mind, dear," comforted Ena, encircling her friend's waist, "I can imagine what a trial it must be for you; but we don't think any the less of you for it. It is only one of those unhappy occurrences which come up in life, and must be borne bravely."

"Thank you, Ena, for your encouragement, and now I will try and not let it annoy me. Here we are at the house, welcome to our home," and Rosabelle kissed her friend fondly.

"How nice it is inside!" exclaimed Ena, as she entered the kitchen, then the large dining-room and the spare bed-room. The dining-room opened on to a delightful porch; a sitting-room and two other bed-rooms completed the house.

"You have plenty of room, haven't you?" said Ena.

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"Yes, it is a delightfully comfortable home. Papa has spared no expense to make it convenient, and, now, if you are ready, we will proceed to get supper for the men."

They went to work in earnest and soon had everything in readiness and rang the bell. First to answer the call was Rosabelle's father, to whom Ena was introduced. The latter saw, at a glance, where her friend derived her refinement of manner. Then came Bill Davis and Tim Snyder. For a while the meal threatened to be a very silent one; but soon Rosabelle broke the spell by asking:

"Bill, what has become of your two hounds? I have not seen them for a long while."

"And you never will again, Miss Rosabelle, for they are both dead."

"Can that be possible!" exclaimed the girl. "Do tell me how it happened."

"Well, you see, Silas Ray and myself were out camping one night and the dogs had wandered off quite a distance, when we heard a coyote cry, as if in pain. I said to Silas, with a laugh:

"'The hounds are making quick work of that fellow all right.' But, Miss Rosabelle, I laughed too soon, for, immediately after, I

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saw the hounds making for camp; and would you believe it! there clung a panther on the back of one, while the other was trying to tear him off. It was the work of a moment to seize my rifle and put a bullet through the animal's head; but too late to save my dog, for he died of his wounds soon after."

"O, wasn't that sad! I know how dreadfully you must have felt," said Rosabelle. "But how do you suppose it happened?"

"The dogs must have run down the coyote and were tormenting him, and the panther must have crept upon them unawares, and caught the dog; for, had they had a fair show, I know they could have killed him."

"And the other one, what became of him?"

"He simply died of a broken heart, Miss Rosabelle; his grief was pitiable to see. I did everything in my power to help him, but it was no use. He pined away and died."

"How they must have loved each other!" exclaimed Ena.

"They did, Miss Graham," said Bill Davis, "as much as human beings could ever love. I raised them from pups and they had always been together. I felt safe no matter where I went, with Bluster and Fluster along."

"You certainly must miss them awfully,"

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said the girl.

"More than I ever cared to acknowledge," he answered; "for, even now, when I enter my cabin, a feeling of loneliness possesses me, which I can scarcely overcome."

"It was a streak of hard luck," remarked Tim Snyder, "and no mistake about it."

"Tell Ena, Bill, how Bluster and Fluster saved your life last winter."

"It was this way: I was out hunting cattle and the snow was pretty deep, so I got off my horse and climbed a tree to view the country 'round. While there, I heard my dogs bark, but was so interested looking through my field-glasses that I paid no heed to them, until they stood right under me, barking furiously. I looked down and, to my horror, I saw a large bear climbing toward me. What was I to do? I was spellbound with terror. Up, up came Bruin, until he was within but a few feet of me, then my tongue seemed loosed, and I let such a yell out of me as would have made a Comanche Indian ashamed of himself. It frightened the bear so, that he let go and fell to the ground. Then it was, the dogs took care of him and I was able to get my rifle; so, between us all, we made quick work of the beast."

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"What narrow escapes you men have with your lives," said Ena, shuddering. "If that had been a woman, she would have fainted and that would have been the last of her."

"But a woman would hardly have been up a tree out on the lonely mountain side, Miss Ena," suggested John Pettibone.

"That's even so," she answered.

Thus the conversation flowed on, when presently Snyder said:

"Did any of you ever see a coyote hunting antelope kids?"

"No," replied Bill Davis, "tell us about it."

"Once, when I was riding along the foothills in Antelope Valley, I saw a coyote coming out of one of the gulches. I watched the cunning animal, as it trotted out on the flat and began to quarter the ground like a hunting dog; yet, every moment or two, it would stop and look towards the hills, as if afraid of something that was coming. Pretty soon I saw a doe antelope galloping over the hills, coming full tilt toward the coyote.

"As soon as the coyote saw the doe, he made for the hills; but the antelope caught up with him and struck him with her hoof. Gee! how that coyote did yell with pain, and I was that hard-hearted that I stood there and

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saw the doe finish him. I soon found what the coyote was after; for I came across two kids a little distance from there."

"Are antelope kids ever tamed?" asked Ena. "I should think they would make such graceful pets."

"Yes," answered Rosabelle's father, who, up to this time, had been a quiet listener to all that was being said. "I had a friend who caught one for his boys; but, when it grew up, it was so rough and destructive they sold him."

"Why didn't they kill him? Are they not good eating, Mr. Pettibone?" asked Ena.

"Yes, very good; but you see it was such a pet, the boys couldn't bear the thought."

"Of course, I ought to have known that was the reason," said Ena, impatient at her own stupidity.

"Never mind," soothed Rosabelle, laughingly, "we seldom think of the correct thing to say at the right time, Ena."

Thus the meal passed very pleasantly, and, when the girls had finished their night's work, they sat on the porch until bedtime.

CHAPTER XII

RANCH LIFE (Continued)

ENA'S sleep was sweet and dreamless on this, her first night on the ranch. Awakening next morning, she looked out of her window and saw a field of waving grain, beyond which were low foot-hills, which gradually towered into high mountains. She arose, and, after performing her toilet, she entered the kitchen. There, to her amazement, she found breakfast nearly ready.

"Why didn't you call me, Rosabelle? I wanted to help you."

"I hadn't the heart to disturb you; you were sleeping so peacefully."

"The air here is so invigorating that it woos slumber."

"Thanks in behalf of our atmosphere," answered Rosabelle.

Stepping to the kitchen-door, Ena saw before her a log house and asked what it was.

"That is the bunk-house, where the men sleep," Rosabelle answered.

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“Doesn’t the sun look gorgeous, Rosabelle, as it rises from behind those mountains, flooding the landscape with its yellow rays?”

“It does indeed,” said her friend. “Often I stand there and watch it slowly rise, until the brightness becomes too blinding.”

“What is that row of buildings to the right, Rosabelle?”

“They are our chicken-houses, and beyond them are the stable and corrals.”

By one of these corrals some calves were standing, looking through the bars and now and then bawling to the cows, which were being milked within. Behind the house, Ena could see a number of horses being driven by a man on horseback into the corrals.

“Ring the bell, Ena, won’t you please?” asked Rosabelle.

“You mean sound the curfew, don’t you, from the size of it?”

“I suppose so; I have been told that you can hear that bell for a distance of two miles.”

“I don’t doubt that in the least, it has such a sonorous sound.” Here both girls commenced laughing, and had just time to straighten their faces, as the men entered the door and passed into the dining-room.

“What are you all going to do to-day,

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John?" asked Rosabelle.

"Have a meeting in Antelope Valley, to decide about the round-up. But, first of all, we will brand some calves, then Bill, there, is going to try his fine saddle-horse; ain't you, Bill?"

"That's what, if he don't pile me."

"Which one is it, Bill?" asked Rosabelle.

"That sorrel colt, which you admired so much, Miss Rosabelle."

"Why, he is just off the range, Bill, and as wild as a deer."

"We'll find some way to tame him down, see if we don't."

Ena sat listening to this conversation, which interested her very much.

"Well, Ena," said Rosabelle, "you will have the pleasure of seeing a bronco ridden."

"Will he buck, Mr. Davis?"

"I rather guess he will, unless he's different from others I've been on."

"I am so glad!" exclaimed the girl. "That's if he doesn't hurt you; for I am so anxious to see what you Westerners call a 'bucking cayuse.'"

"You'll not be disappointed in this chap, I think, Miss Graham; for he comes of a bucking stock," said Mr. Davis.

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The meal being finished, John said, as he arose from the table:

"Bring Miss Ena and let her see us catch our horses, Rosabelle. I think she'll like it."

"Come, dear, we can clean up afterward; it is such fun to watch them."

"Let's clear the table first, Rosabelle, then we can go."

This they did, then scampered off, walking toward the big pen into which the horses had been driven. Before they had reached it, however, a cloud of dust arose from it. The girls climbed upon the top rail of the corral fence and saw all the horses huddled in a corner. One was following Tim Snyder with a rope around its neck.

"O pshaw! we missed seeing them rope that horse," said Ena, vexatiously.

"Have patience," answered Rosabelle, "they will catch another one."

Soon they saw Bill Davis walk toward the horses, which began circling round the corral. He held a long rope in both hands, the part in his left hand being in a small coil, while, from his right hand, a long loop trailed behind him in the dust. Suddenly he threw his right hand forward; the large loop flew out and settled over the head of a bay horse

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that was galloping past.

"How nicely that was done!" said Ena, whose face was the picture of excitement.

The cowboy, hearing her, turned and raised his hat in token of acknowledgment.

"That is what we call lassoing cayuses, Ena," explained Rosabelle, "and the rope is called a lasso."

"I'll soon be initiated into the mysteries of ranching," laughed Ena. "What is next on the program, Mr. Pettibone?"

"I think Bill intends taking a turn on his bronco. How's that, Bill? Are you ready to be shaken up a bit?"

"Yes, anything to please the ladies," he answered, "even to trying to get my neck broke."

"O is there any danger of your being hurt, Mr. Davis?" anxiously asked Ena.

"Can't always tell, Miss Graham, just how a man will come out who rides the hurricane-deck of a wild cayuse."

"But you are not afraid, are you?" persisted the girl.

"Come now, Bill," protested John Pettibone, "stop that there guying Miss Ena, jest to have her pity you."

"All right, John," and turning to Ena he said:

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"No, miss, I'm not a bit afraid. I have ridden many of them, and so far, none have gotten the best of me."

Thus reassured, Ena was all eagerness to see the novel sight. The wild sorrel colt trotted 'round the corral, holding his head high and ears forward. His neck was arched, his coat shone in the sun, and his long tail almost swept the ground.

"What a beautiful animal!" exclaimed Ena, who was a great lover of horses. "I don't wonder you want to break him to ride. But, Mr. Davis, he's too pretty to be made common use of; he ought to belong to a lady."

"Perhaps he will, Miss Graham," said Bill, with an unmistakable glance at Rosabelle, who paid not the least attention to it, and Ena thought it mean, for the cowboy turned toward his horse again, with the mounting color mantling his cheek.

Bill stepped forward with a rope and swung the loop about his head. This made the frightened horse break into a gallop. In a moment, the loop of the rope flew out and the young horse was standing on his hind feet, pawing the air with the forefeet, which were held together by the rope.

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"Wasn't that splendidly done?" exclaimed Ena. "But look at him now, surely that horse will break that rope and tread on those men! What courage men have, anyway."

Rosabelle only laughed at her friend's enthusiasm; for, this being so old a sight to her, she saw nothing very extraordinary about it.

The young horse was terrified now. In vain, he tried to free himself from the rope. He reared again and again on his hind feet, even walking on them. Then he came down on all fours and tried to run; but this he was unable to do. Soon the men pulled the rope, he lost his balance, and fell to the ground. The men kept the rope taut, and Bill, letting go, ran swiftly to the animal's head and sat on it. Then they tied all four feet together and stood back, looking at him.

"He's a good'un," said John Pettibone; "he'll make a rousing good saddle-horse."

"Now, what are you going to do, Mr. Davis?" asked Ena. "You can't ride him tied up in that manner."

"I don't intend to try, Miss Graham," he replied, with a laugh; "but wait a moment and you'll see what comes next."

"I wish I weren't so impatient," said Ena

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to Rosabelle; "you all laugh at me."

"No, we don't, dear; it is only your excitement that amuses us. Look, here comes Bill with his saddle, bridle, hackamore, and quirt. Let's watch what he is going to do."

He laid these things on the ground, then walked up to the horse, and tied a strip of black leather over his eyes.

"Let him loose, boys," directed Bill, and the horse stood on his feet. At first, he didn't offer to move, and Bill went up to him and patted him on the back and neck, and worked around him a good deal. Then he took his saddle-blanket and held it under the horse's nose, so he might smell it. The horse flinched and snorted whenever it touched him, but seemed to be losing his fear, for he again stood still.

Soon the cowboy began to fold the blanket and toss it on the horse's back. The animal made a sidewise motion, but let the blanket remain there. Then he put his saddle on, letting down the stirrups and cinch gently, and cautiously tightened it. When the horse felt the tightening of the broad band, it squealed with fright and kicked viciously with its hind feet.

Then Bill Davis raised himself slowly,

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until his full weight rested on it, and threw his leg over the saddle and settled himself firmly in the seat. The two other men jumped on their horses and took a position on either side of the bronco rider. Then the latter reached forward and pulled off the blind.

Ena bent forward when this was done, and Rosabelle thought she had never seen such a picture of suppressed excitement, as Ena said:

"What will that horse do? How can any man take his life in his own hands that way and, as it were, dare Providence?"

"You must not take that view of the situation, Ena," said her companion. "Suppose all men were afraid to break horses; there would be none to either ride or drive."

"That's so; but do look, Rosabelle, how that animal is plunging and rearing. He will surely throw that man."

"He won't, for Bill is an experienced rider; but now you see a bucking horse, Ena. Look how he lowers his head and puts his feet together, jumping up in the air clear of the ground and coming down stiff-legged; notice, too, how his rider sits immovable in his saddle."

"Yes, it is really marvelous how unconcerned

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he is. Now I believe there are men just fitted for every known occupation in the world."

The bucking had ceased, and, as the colt found he was unable to get rid of the terrible weight on his back, he started off on a run across the flat.

"O dear!" exclaimed Ena, as she saw the horse tearing toward the mountains, "how terrible it must be to be shaken up in that manner. I don't see how the men endure it, Rosabelle."

"You will be surprised to hear then, that there are girls in this valley who really delight in breaking horses."

"Is that a fact? Well, it all depends on the environment of a person."

"So it does, dear," answered her friend; "and now we had better hasten to the house and straighten things up, for it is most time to prepare dinner. The boys won't leave now until the afternoon."

"Really these few hours, Rosabelle, have been the most exciting I ever spent; and how I have enjoyed them, even if my heart was in my mouth more than half the time. So I am ready to settle down for a while and wait for what comes next."

"You won't enjoy branding, Ena; but, for

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the novelty of the thing, I want you to see it.”

“Well, don’t tell me about it first, Rosabelle.”

“I have no such intention, for I am certain, should I initiate you, that I wouldn’t get you out to the corral.”

The afternoon was spent in roaming over the ranch, and the girls had great fun, hunting for eggs that were hidden in the haystacks, where the hens had laid them.

“Rosabelle, what is that long pole I see over there by that farthest haystack?”

“That is what is called a one-pole derrick; with an arm, it unloads the hay from the wagons and it saves a great deal of time and labor. There are also two-pole derricks in the country.”

“It’s remarkable the number of different labor-saving machines that are constantly being invented. Do you have the steam-thrashers here, Rosabelle? I saw one once when I was in Virginia. I was riding in a buggy with a gentleman, when I heard something that sounded like a locomotive on a train, and I said:

“‘Are we near a railroad, Mr. Wilder?’

“‘No, Miss Ena, that is a steam-thresher, and furthermore, my horse will scare at it, and run. Are you afraid?’

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“‘No,’ I answered, ‘if the harness is good. I love fast driving.’”

“‘The entire outfit is new, Miss Ena,’ he said.

“‘There happened to be two persons on horseback just ahead of us, and, as they went to pass the thrasher, I saw the lady’s horse shy and throw her over a fence, which was near-by.’”

“‘Oh, how dreadful!’” exclaimed Rosabelle. “‘Was she hurt?’”

“‘We never ascertained, for, at that moment, our horse took fright and tore along the road. He ran about two miles before he quieted down.’”

“‘You had quite an experience with a steam-thrasher,’” said Rosabelle. “‘We use the horse-power here and will, I presume, until a railroad runs through this country.’”

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. PETTIBONE'S RETURN

THE NEXT two days passed quietly; for the men were out on the round-up and there was no one at the ranch but the girls and Mr. Pettibone, who, being a very quiet man, had little to say. But the third day brought Mrs. Pettibone home, her husband having gone to Challis after her.

"Now," thought Ena, "there will be no lack of conversation."

Sure enough, just as Mrs. Pettibone entered the house, she commenced talking.

"Well, I do declare," she said, as she held out her hand to Ena. "I is so glad to find you he'er. I imagined as how you'd be having such a good time at the Springs, that you'd not want to come out here. How do you like ranching?"

"I am charmed, I can assure you, Mrs. Pettibone," answered Ena; "everything is so new and interesting." Here she related what had happened.

"Yes, that must have been a sight for city

Mrs. Pettibone's Return

folks. Now, we don't pay no attention to sech things, they be so common to us."

"Well, Mamma, won't you take off your hat and stay a while?" laughingly said Rosabelle, for the old lady had forgotten to remove it on entering the house.

"Yes, dear, and O Rosabelle, poor Mrs. Spencer was so sick. Why, the night I got there, she was in sech pain that the doctor had to put an epidemic in each arm of morphine, before she'd git quiet."

"Why, Mother, you mean hypodermic, don't you?"

"Yes, child, I knowed it was some kind of a 'mic and I didn't think it made no difference which."

"Is she better now, Mrs. Pettibone?" asked Ena.

"O yes, she is getting along now; the doctor says she will be all right if she doesn't take an onset and get a collapse."

"A backset and a relapse," corrected Rosabelle.

"Yes, sure; poor dear," said Mrs. Pettibone, turning to Ena, "Rosabelle has a dreadful time with her mother's mistakes; but I tells her to let them alone. People knows what I mean anyhow, and it don't

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make no difference.”

“But, Mother, I can’t help it, you make such ridiculous ones.”

“Never mind if I do; jest you let them alone.

“Mrs. Scott, too, has been very sick. She had sech a fright about her baby swallowing a piece of glass that it gave her the nervous sensations, and she had to have the doctor.”

Here Rosabelle looked at Ena and sighed, but she only said:

“I am sorry she has been so ill. Did the glass hurt the child?”

“No, and the most wonderful thing of all was that the baby passed it without it doing no damage.”

“That was a narrow escape for the child,” said Ena.

“Well, Mamma, any more Challis news?”

“Yes, you love flowers so, that this will interest you, Rosabelle. Mr. Weber told me that Mrs. Carpenter had seen an advertise in a paper about an electric plant, and that she had sent for one, and, if it growed, she was going to give Mrs. Weber a slip and she would give us one too.”

This was too much for the girls to stand, and they both burst out laughing.

“Well,” said the old lady, indignantly,

Mrs. Pettibone's Return

"I'll tell you two no more," and she flounced out of the room.

"Come back, Mamma, and let us explain," said Rosabelle, as she gently forced her mother back into her chair. She then told her what an electric plant was.

"I do declare, how stupid some folks be anyways. By the way, I he'rd a disgraceful thing about Mrs. Sanders. She sent for a lot of goods to Mrs. Bill Jones's store, and, at the bottom, she put, 'Send Bill.'

"You never saw any one so mad as Mrs. Jones was. She said, indeed she wouldn't send Bill, and Mr. Sanders not at home, and they had quite a time about it. Some women haven't got no shame."

"O Mamma, there wasn't anything in that," said Rosabelle.

"Nothing in that! Why, child, you don't know what you're talking about. One woman wanting another woman's husband! I like to know what could be worse."

"But Mrs. Sanders didn't want Mrs. Jones's husband; she only wanted the amount of her goods, the bill for them."

"Well, well, Mrs. Jones ought to have known that and not made such a scene. That is surely funny, no wonder you laughed."

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Ena happened to glance out of the window at that moment, and, seeing a lot of cattle coming out of the canyon, she said:

"Look, Rosabelle, what's coming."

"It's the boys on the round-up. I wonder how many there are."

"We'll have to find out, Rosabelle," said her mother, "when John comes, so we'll know jest how much supper to git. Why, there's John now, coming to the house."

"Well, Mother, you back again? Glad to see you," and he laid his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

"Yes, and glad I be too; there's no place like home."

"You bet," he answered, then turning to his sister, he remarked:

"I suppose you'll be glad to see six hungry cowboys for supper, Rosabelle?"

"O I don't mind, for we've got plenty of help now," turning a roguish glance on Ena.

"Yes, I can help lots, can't I?" she answered.

"Why, of course, Miss Ena, you can help—help entertain us; that's task enough for you," said John.

"I intend making myself more useful than that, Mr. Pettibone," she replied.

Mrs. Pettibone's Return

The supper-table that night was considerably longer than usual, and, after the meal was finished, the boys went to feed the horses.

"Ena," said Rosabelle, as they were finishing their work, "would you mind if I asked those young fellows to join us on the porch this evening?"

"Certainly not, and we will have them tell us some interesting stories about this sort of life."

"Some of them are equal to spinning good yarns, as they call it, if they are not too bashful."

"I will be so pleasant to them, that they will forget I'm a stranger," said Ena.

"You're equal to it, so I feel sure you will hear some adventures to-night."

When Rosabelle extended the invitation, it was readily accepted by the cowboys, and soon the conversation became general. Ena, with tact, was bringing them out and leading them toward the object she had in view. Finally she said:

"Have any of you gentlemen ever had an experience with wild beasts on your tours through the mountains?"

A young fellow by the name of George Ford spoke up:

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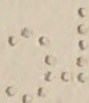
"I'll tell you, Miss Graham, that Jim Evans had as narrow an escape as ever he'll have, without going for good. Tell them about it, Jim."

"Well, it happened this way. It was long past noon when George and I entered Thousand Spring Valley and went up into the mountains after some cattle. The country was exceedingly rough and rugged. As we were climbing one of the foot-hills, there arose from a shelf in the rocks a long, slim, yellow animal, which began to sneak away up the drawer.

"‘There's a mountain lion, Jim,’ said George. ‘Don't let us molest him.’

"I answered: ‘All right,’ when just then our confounded dogs saw him and gave chase. The lion ran up the mountain side and climbed a tree. I drew up my horse and fired at the animal, who stood facing me, snarling. As the gun went off, the lion prepared to swing from the tree toward me, when George saw him and screamed:

"‘For God's sake, spur your horse, Jim,’ which I did and only in the nick of time, for the lion fell just where I and my horse had stood. My shot, though, had proved fatal, for the lion was dead when we reached him.”



Mrs. Pettibone's Return

"What a narrow escape that was for you, Mr. Evans. Weren't you frightened?" asked Ena.

"Indeed I was shaking in my boots for a while, Miss Graham; but after the danger has passed, we cowboys think no more about it."

"I guess not," said Ena, "for you all face danger coolly and calmly."

"Ena has witnessed the breaking of a bronco and it has raised the cowboy in her estimation, as far as courage is concerned," volunteered Rosabelle.

"Yet we are a cowardly set, when it comes to the ladies," answered George Ford.

"I suppose the reason of that is," said Ena, "that we can answer back and the animal can't."

"You are right, Miss Graham, and it is just that reply which scares us out," he said.

"You remember, Harry," asked John Pettibone, "what a time we had with that cow and the coyotes?"

"I rather say I do."

"Please tell us about it, Mr. Pettibone."

John smiled at Ena's eagerness to listen to their stories, then said:

"A cow with her calf had left the bunch,

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and, when we found her, coyotes were after her calf; and would you believe, that fool critter wanted to fight us for driving the coyotes away. I always did say that they be senseless animals."

"It seems to me," said Ena, "that a cow ought to drive off the coyotes herself."

"That's right, Miss Ena," agreed John, "if the cow would show some sense; but it seems she loses what little she has, when the coyotes attack her little one."

"Isn't that like the female sex in general," laughed Rosabelle; "her senses leave her just when she needs them the most."

"On the other hand, Miss Rosabelle, if she were brave and courageous, we men would not have the pleasure of thinking we were necessary to her for protection," said Bill Davis.

"Bully for you, Bill," said John Pettibone; "but to go on with my story. You see it is this way, the coyotes gits 'round the cow and calf, then first one then another makes a dash at the cow and tries to make her mad, or to scare her calf away from her. If the calf leaves its mother, it gits a bite, and the cow gits mad and begins to chase the coyotes. Very likely the calf gits left behind and gits

Mrs. Pettibone's Return

pulled down. The only safe place for a calf is by its mother's side."

"Well, now, after all, the cow is placed in a dreadful predicament; no wonder her senses leave her. I should think most anybody's would under such trying circumstances," resented Ena.

Each of the cowboys told some interesting adventure that had befallen him and it was near midnight before they retired. As the good-nights were being said, Rosabelle asked:

"May we come to the corral to-morrow morning and see you brand?"

"By all means, if you can stand the shock," said Jim Evans.

"We will try," answered Ena, "for I have never seen it done."

Next morning the girls went to the corrals and saw some of the men carrying wood to the big corral, close to the fence. Some were building fires, while others were chopping poles and logs to burn in them. A number of long-handled iron bars stood against the fence, each with some kind of a design on it.

"Those are the branding irons," explained Rosabelle, on having her attention called to them by Ena; "see, they will heat them in the fire."

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The men had driven a bunch of cows with their calves into the corral. Two men with ropes now entered and threw them over a calf. Then some of the men quickly dragged it out into the middle of the corral, threw it down, and put the red-hot iron on it. The hair and skin hissed under the hot iron and smoke arose; then they let it get up and it ran to its mother.

"That's enough branding for me!" cried Ena. "I can't stand by and look at those poor creatures tortured in that manner."

"Well, how else could the owners tell their cattle apart?" defended Rosabelle; "it does seem cruel, but it is the custom."

As the girls turned to leave the corral, Bill Davis called out:

"What! you are not going so soon?"

"Yes, we are," answered Ena. "I can't endure any more of that sort of business."

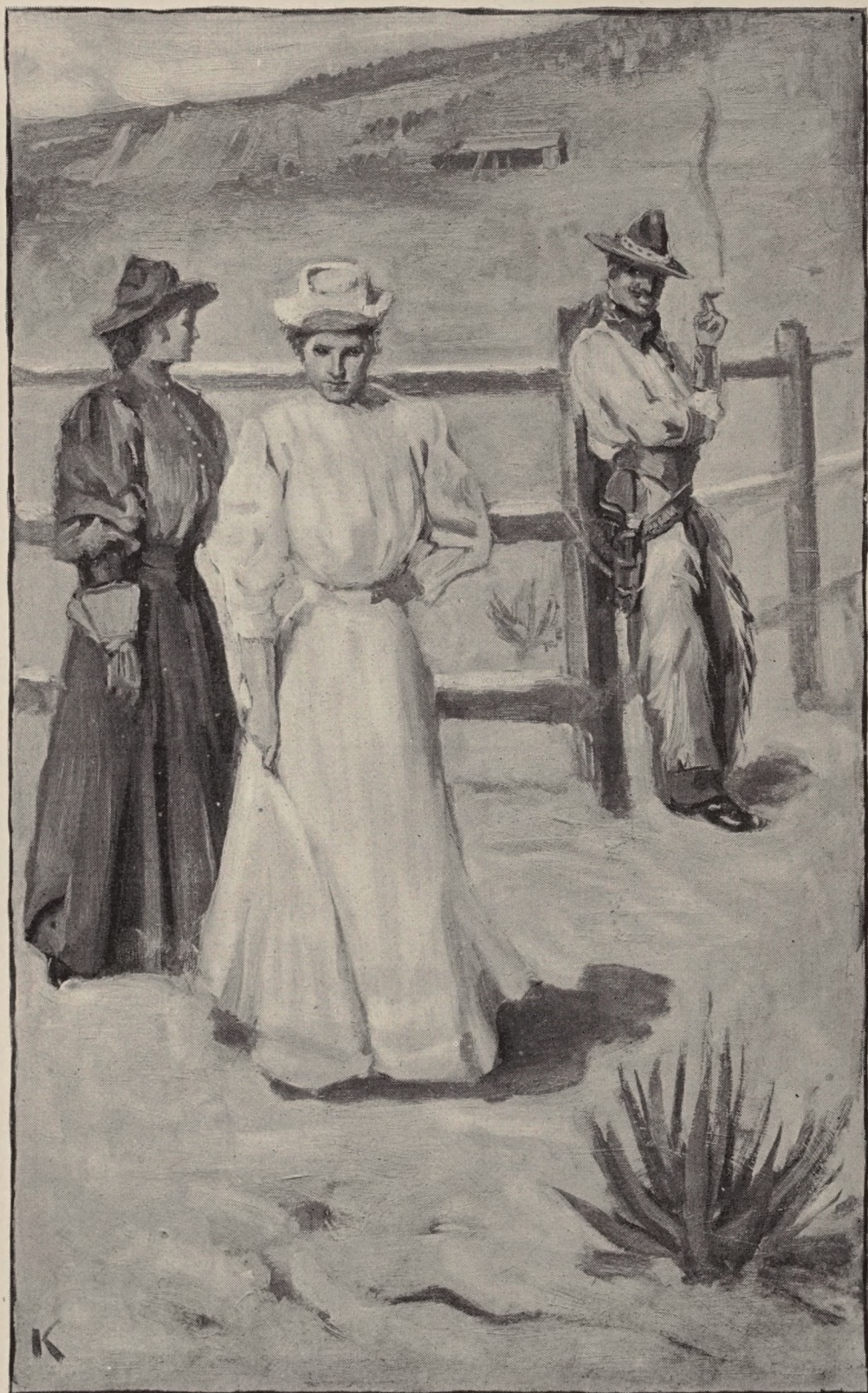
They heard a general snicker from the men, as they proceeded toward the house.

"Ena," said Rosabelle, "would you like to take a ride to Challis this afternoon?"

"Nothing would please me better."

"Then we will go immediately after dinner. I will get Papa to hitch up for us."

They hurried through their work and soon



Bill Davis called out: "What! you are not going so soon?"

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were driving up the valley, where the brilliant red and yellow flowers of the cactus dotted the ground, over which they traveled. Also the tiny pink blossom of the wild geranium could be seen thickly scattered on the slopes. The girls laughed and talked as they journeyed along, and Ena was really surprised when she caught a glimpse of the little town of Challis.

"Where are you going first, Rosabelle?" Ena asked.

"We will do some shopping, then I will take you to call on my friend, Mrs. Rainey, whose husband owns a number of sheep. You will find her pleasant, I know."

"All right, dear, anything for a good time," answered Ena.

Shopping over, Rosabelle went to visit Mrs. Rainey, who was overjoyed at seeing her, and glad of the opportunity of meeting Ena.

"I called at the Springs yesterday," said Mrs. Rainey, "and met your sister, who told me you were spending some time with Rosabelle. How are you impressed with ranching?"

"It is all so new and novel," answered Ena, "that I enjoy it very much; but, whether I'd like to live there and make it my home,

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is a question I would have to take under consideration."

"My opinion is," said Rosabelle, "I don't believe Ena is cut out for a rancher's wife."

"Well, then, all the young cowboys will have to put a padlock on their hearts, so as not to have them escape in her direction," said Mrs. Rainey.

"I am afraid she has already made a serious impression on half a dozen of them," answered Rosabelle.

"Now you know that's an untruth, Rosabelle," said Ena; "for I only just met them."

"Never mind, girls, I have another subject to speak on and a proposition to make. Would you both like to visit the shearing-camp next week with me?"

Rosabelle answered: "Of course you know I will go. How about you, Ena?"

"It would be very enjoyable; but I must first ask permission, before laying any plans."

"As to that, Miss Ena," said Mrs. Rainey, "I spoke to Mrs. Drisco and she said she knew you would be delighted to go."

"It's settled then. What day do you go, Mrs. Rainey?"

"This is Friday, we leave next Thursday. You and Rosabelle can come up Wednesday

Mrs. Pettibone's Return

and stay all night with me, so we can get an early start."

This being satisfactorily arranged, the girls stayed and visited a while longer, then left for home. That night, as they were preparing for bed, Ena said:

"I must leave in the morning, Rosabelle, as I have some sewing to do before I go to the shearing camp. I have had a delightful time and shall always remember my first experience in ranching."

"I hate to see you go," said her friend; "it will be so awfully lonesome; but I can't expect to keep you always."

"No, but it's too bad you didn't have a sister; she would have been so much company for you."

"She surely would. I asked Mamma once why she didn't have another girl, and she said she was satisfied; so that ended the matter."

"It certainly did," said Ena, laughing.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNAPPRECIATED PRESENT

EARLY next morning, Rosabelle and Ena left for Drisco Springs. Hilder met them at the door, saying:

"It's a good thing that you returned to-day; for, if you hadn't, Fanny and I could not have restrained our curiosity any longer and would have opened a large box which came by express in your name yesterday."

"O where is it? Quick, Hilder, I am dying to see what's in it. Who do you think sent it?"

"Wait, not so fast and I will show you where it is."

Here Fanny came to the door and welcomed them, saying:

"It is no use asking you if you had a good time, Ena, for I know you did."

"Indeed yes, I saw and heard lots of things I never did before. What a lot of things I did learn, Rosabelle, now I come to think of it. But where is my box?"

"That is what you are most interested

An Unappreciated Present

in at present," said Fanny; "come this way, there it is."

Ena opened it and found it filled with the most delicious fruit, but she also found Mr. Griscom's card.

"O pshaw, how provoking! I wish it was not from him. I do so dislike being under obligations to that man."

"Well, we can enjoy the fruit, then you can let him know how very distasteful his presents are to you," suggested Hilder. "By the way, Mr. Lindsley, who is spending a while here, says that you can expect to see the sender of your gift any time; he heard you were expected home."

"O dear me, if that man only knew how I dislike him, he would stay away," groaned Ena. "Actually, this fruit tastes sour, because he sent it."

"For shame, Ena," rebuked Fanny; "this is elegant," helping herself to another peach.

"All the same, I wish he had not been so generous; but come, girls, let's go and take a bath and not talk of him."

They had a delightful plunge and after dinner Rosabelle left for home.

That evening Hilder and Ena entertained a number of the miners, who were stopping

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at the Springs.

"Please tell me something about mining," asked Ena of Frank Walker to whom she had been talking. "I've heard so much about cattle and horses that I think a diversion would be enjoyable. I heard that there had been a big strike in L— district. Do you know anything about it?"

"I rather guess I do, when I was among the first to get there after the find. Well, when the news was spread on the outside that there was a big thing on hand, the newspapers took it up, and, first thing we knew, there were experts in canvas leggings and corduroy pantaloons appearing on the scene. Now, if the quartz ledge that has been discovered is really as good as they think and contains high values, especially if it can be secured by the proposition men for a moderate sum, it is pronounced to be a true fisher vein to go down clear to Hades (pardon the remark) and carry high values."

"What does the discoverer of a mine generally get for it?" inquired Hilder, who had become interested in the description.

"Why, he gets enough money to get tipsy on, sometimes enough to get the delirium tremens, while there is a hot air boom extend-

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ing 'round about a radius of seventy or eighty miles."

"Is that the only way men in this country think of spending their money?" asked Ena, with a disgusted expression on her face.

"Not exactly, Miss Ena," answered Mr. Lindsley; "please give some of us credit for good common sense. I would be sorry to think of us all being so degraded as that. But I tell you what it is, it's hard luck for a prospector to come out with the experience, while the company gets the gains."

"It really must be," agreed Ena; "but pardon the interruption, Mr. Walker, and proceed."

"You will be very much more severe, Miss Ena, if I do," resumed Frank Walker, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well, go ahead and let us be the judge," she replied.

"We prospectors thought that was the best thing for him; for, if he kept sober and tried to develop his prospect, he would die, either of old age or starvation."

"I don't doubt that it is best for a poor man to sell his prospect rather than work it; but he ought to save his money and invest in something that will make a man of him,

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and not lower him to the level of a beast."

"That's very true, Miss Ena," acknowledged Mr. Walker; "but a prospector will not do that. He will either sink the money in the ground again, or into his stomach."

Here the whole party joined in a laugh, for the men knew just how true that was.

"You ladies cannot realize how hard it is for a man to keep sober in a mining-camp," explained Mr. Lindsley to Hilder; "for the first thing the boys do as you enter it, is to take you into a saloon and invite you to have a drink of bug juice, as they call whiskey. If you refuse, you incur the enmity of the entire community and you might as well get out; for you will never prosper there."

"Is it not a pity that man is his own enemy in that respect?" returned Hilder. "He knows the ruination and degradation that liquor brings upon him; yet he will insist, not only in bringing these terrible things on himself, but forces others to do the same."

"It does seem strange; but man is a peculiar being, Miss Hilder," continued Mr. Lindsley. "I once knew a grand man. He was rough, unpolished, just as nature made him; but he was of granite hewn and the flaws of his superb manhood were those of finish,

An Unappreciated Present

not of worth. He was odd in the eyes of the world; but, you know, from the blackest sand, sometimes, comes the purest gold. Well, he was restless and fearless, one of those who love to test their barge in the storm of life and feel the magic touch of the maddened waves.

"But alas! we who were his friends, knew how stubbornly he fought against the fearful weakness of his life, and knew, too, how the battle was lost. The treacherous, climbing, clinging curse was barred, though, when it reached the recesses of his soul; it could not degrade his manhood, dull his sense of honor, or tarnish integrity, or drive the perfume of brotherly compassion from his generous breast. With all, he was a man to win your affections, if not your respect."

"O how sad!" exclaimed Ena. "Such a character is surely to be pitied, not blamed. But tell me, does the accursed taste for whiskey take such a hold on a man?"

"So much so that he will go to the uttermost to obtain it."

CHAPTER XV

A REFUSAL

ENA AND FANNY were quietly conversing over the former's prospective trip to the shearing camp, when Herbert entered the room and announced that Mr. Griscom had arrived.

"It was a real pleasure, Ena, to see his countenance light up when I told him you were home."

"O dear, now I will have to entertain that detestable man," she sighed.

"Why, my dear little sister, he is a real good fellow, and he has the money! I can't fathom your dislike for him."

"Money, in my estimation, Herbert, is not all; besides, there is something about the man that I distrust and dislike exceedingly. He reminds me of a cat charming a bird, only to its destruction."

"What a horrible opinion you have of him, Ena!" said her sister. "But, feeling thus, you cannot like him."

"He is the dullest man I ever saw, for

A Refusal

taking a hint. I have shown my aversion to him on various occasions and he seems utterly oblivious to it."

"Well, your only alternative, then, is to bring him to a focus," laughed Herbert; "in other words, let him propose."

"That's not very good advice, my husband," rebuked Fanny.

"What other course can she pursue, I should like to know, but that?" he answered.

"That is true; Ena dear, you are certainly in a dilemma," admitted her sister.

"It is a great nuisance to have a man in love with you whom you don't like," replied the girl.

"Well, you can't love them all, any more than you can marry them all, so you will have to put up with existing circumstances, sister mine," suggested Herbert, as he went off, laughing.

Next morning, as Ena was engaged with some housework, there came a knock at the door. On opening it, she was greeted by Mr. Griscom.

"Good morning, Miss Ena. Are you too busy to come for a stroll with me?"

"I am certainly employed at present, Mr. Griscom."

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"But won't you soon be at leisure? It seems such a pity that a lovely morning like this should be wasted indoors; and I am not selfish enough to enjoy it alone. If I wait, say an hour, will you then accompany me?"

As the girl had no further excuse to offer, she reluctantly consented and Arthur Griscom went off in a happy mood. At ten o'clock, Ena appeared, equipped for a walk, and was joined by her companion.

"Which way shall we go?" she asked.

"The way nature has made the most beautiful, Miss Ena: down by the sparkling, laughing water."

Now, Arthur Griscom was always spouting poetry and describing nature, and Ena would have enjoyed it, had it come from any other source; but, in him, it sounded so out of place. As they seated themselves on the bank of the rushing Salmon River, Mr. Griscom plunged headlong into the subject nearest his heart.

"Can you imagine, Miss Ena, why I was so anxious for this interview?"

"Not being a mind reader, Mr. Griscom, I cannot, unless it was to take this beautiful walk and admire nature."

"That's just it; but you mean one nature,

A Refusal

I another. Mine is human nature in your own sweet form."

"Now, Mr. Griscom, if you are going to be sentimental, I shall leave you immediately."

"Do you know what sentiment is?"

"Not exactly. Can you describe it, Mr. Griscom?"

"I think I can, Miss Ena. Sentiment is the lingering touch that makes the canvas speak, the subtle chiseling that makes the marble breathe. In the material age, though, sentiment in human character is divided; but, after all, it is the sunshine within the soul."

Ena could not help admiring his definition, much as she disliked the man, so she said:

"That is a beautiful thought, Mr. Griscom, and you have clothed it well."

"Thanks, for even a little praise from those dear lips. I am not often the recipient of any; but, Ena, you must know, can surely guess, why I brought you here? Have you not seen how madly I have grown to love you? Do you not realize that my attentions have been vastly more than friendly? You are modest as a violet, my bright Ena, and, although I have tried to win some signs of answering affection from you, yet you

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have denied me such.

"You have evaded my every look, my every word of love. But, my beautiful darling, it seems as if my true heart must find in yours a fond return. My love, look up into my eyes, lay your hand in mine, and tell me you will give yourself to me."

Ena hesitated a moment, then answered:

"One thing I am glad of, Mr. Griscom, and it is this: you have exonerated me from flirting with you. I do not deny that I have seen your growing affection for me. But how could I stop it without being presuming? My only course was discouragement, which I now see did not prove effective. Although I shrink from giving you pain, yet in justice to myself, I must say I can never be your wife."

"What! you refuse me? Take time to consider my proposition, Ena. You can't imagine what this means to me. Give me just one ray of hope, my darling, just one!"

"I can't, I can't. Why did you let your affections become so unmanageable until you knew the issue?"

"Now, that is woman's unreasonableness," he said grimly. "Ena, the first time I laid eyes on you, my doom was sealed."

A Refusal

She could have echoed her aversion at the same time, but she answered:

“Mr. Griscom, I can never love you, so cannot marry you. Come, let us return to the house and end this painful interview.”

He arose mechanically, gently assisting her, and together they walked in silence toward home.

“O Hilder! it is miserable to listen to a man declare his love, whom you despise!” cried Ena, as she threw herself down beside her sister and burst into tears.

“Never mind, dear, he will get over his disappointment.”

“I don’t think he will, Hilder, he was so terribly in earnest. And oh, the way he looked at me with his very soul in his eyes! Why couldn’t I like him? He might have made me happy; but, Hilder, that hidden something made me beware of him and actually hate him.”

“Now he will leave, Ena, and not bother you any more.”

“I hope so, for this interview has completely unnerved me.”

“But still, dear, can’t you feel sorry for a love like his, when it is not reciprocated? I do; my heart goes out in sympathy for the

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unfortunate man."

"I would, Hilder, but for the feeling that the thing he loved most he would torture most."

"O that is dreadful for you to say, Ena! Put such wicked thoughts out of your mind."

"I will try, dear," she answered meekly, as her sister smoothed the fair brow with a caressing hand.

If Hilder Graham thought that Arthur Griscom was going to leave the Springs without one last trial, she was deceived; for he was determined to have her intercede for him. That afternoon, as she and Fanny's children were out for a walk near the foot of the mountain, Mr. Griscom came along. As he neared them, he said:

"Miss Hilder, couldn't you send the children away, as I have a matter of grave importance to discuss with you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Griscom." Inwardly she exclaimed: "O dear! now I am to be brought into his love-affairs."

You may be certain that the little ones were not at all pleased with the turn affairs had taken, and, if the man could have overheard their conversation, he would not have felt complimented. When they were out

A Refusal

of hearing, Mr. Griscom said:

“You have doubtless heard, from your sister, the disastrous ending to my fondest dreams; but I happened to think of one ray of hope through my dark despair, and it was you, that maybe you could help me. O Miss Hilder! What is this thing, love, which men praise and laud and represent as the glory and blessing of life? It seems to me, now, a very curse and devil’s gift. What does it do, but wreck us, bewilder us, drive us even to the brink of insanity, poison all the purest and best in us with one mad, overmastering desire!”

Hilder shuddered. These words were terrible to her. She had thought of love so differently. It made her brain giddy to look into the depths of this man’s heart. His entire disregard of conventionality, the singleness of his purpose, and the fierce sway of his passion, were revolting to her. Now she could well appreciate Ena’s “something,” which made her sister fairly despise him.

What could she say in answer to this mad appeal? How different would have been his sentiments had his love been returned? Hilder’s sympathy went out to this disappointed man; for she knew her reply would

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only stab deeper into the already lacerated wound.

Mr. Griscom, noticing the distressed expression on Hilder's face, said gently:

"You have no encouragement to offer, I can readily perceive, Miss Hilder."

"None whatever, Mr. Griscom. Ena told me that it would be impossible for her to marry you."

The man at her side grew deadly pale as she said this; but, mastering himself with great effort, he answered:

"If such is the case, I will accept the inevitable. Come, shall we go to the house?"

When Arthur Griscom left Hilder, she thought: "A man of his temperament who loves—still more at his age—does it with a terrible completeness. Strength has its dangers as well as its weaknesses. They are touched with dignity and splendor, it is true; but they are too often touched as well, with a species of desperation. Such natures as his, under the dominion of a fixed idea, are horribly difficult to cope with. Nothing turns them aside. They will go through fire and water, utterly regardless of the well-intentioned remonstrances of those interested, to reach the goal, whatever it may be."

A Refusal

Hilder decided not to harass Ena with a rehearsal of this interview, but she would acquaint Fanny with the facts.

CHAPTER XVI

REVENGE AWAKENED

THE following afternoon, Walter Aldrich appeared at the Springs. Although Mr. Griscom had not given this young man any thought as to being his rival, yet his dismissal had turned his thoughts toward revenge, and he determined to be present at the meeting. Not having the least suspicion as to what was passing in Mr. Griscom's mind, Ena greeted Mr. Aldrich with a fervor that shot an arrow straight into the other's heart, killing love and creating hate. From that moment, Walter Aldrich's doom was sealed regarding his position in the mine.

That night they all gathered in the sitting-room to play cards and have a jolly time. None of them seemed to enjoy it more than Arthur Griscom; but Hilder noticed that, whenever his eye lit on Walter Aldrich, a peculiar expression came into it, almost demoniacal. As the girls entered their room, Ena said:

“You are right, Hilder, in your supposition

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regarding Mr. Griscom. Did you notice how gay he seemed?"

Hilder only answered: "Yes, dear," and kept her own counsel. For it would not do, she thought, to tell Ena her suspicions; but next day Hilder told Fanny what she had noticed, saying:

"Mark my words, Fan, I don't believe Walter Aldrich will be working in Bayhorse long."

"That's all foolishness, Hilder. I know the superintendent, Mr. Lindsley, thinks everything of him and so does the company. You must be mistaken."

"Well, I hope I am, but I'm of Ena's opinion now: Arthur Griscom is not a man to be trusted."

It was with a sigh of relief that the two girls saw Mr. Griscom depart, and they hoped sincerely he would never return.

"Now, what a good time we shall have!" exclaimed Ena. "We can play croquet and go out walking and riding; for Mr. Lindsley and Walter Aldrich are going to remain here a week. Aren't you charmed, sister mine, at the former's stay? I know you are; just see you blush," and Ena laughingly went away.

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"A penny for your thoughts, Mr. Aldrich?" said Ena, as they sat on the porch that evening.

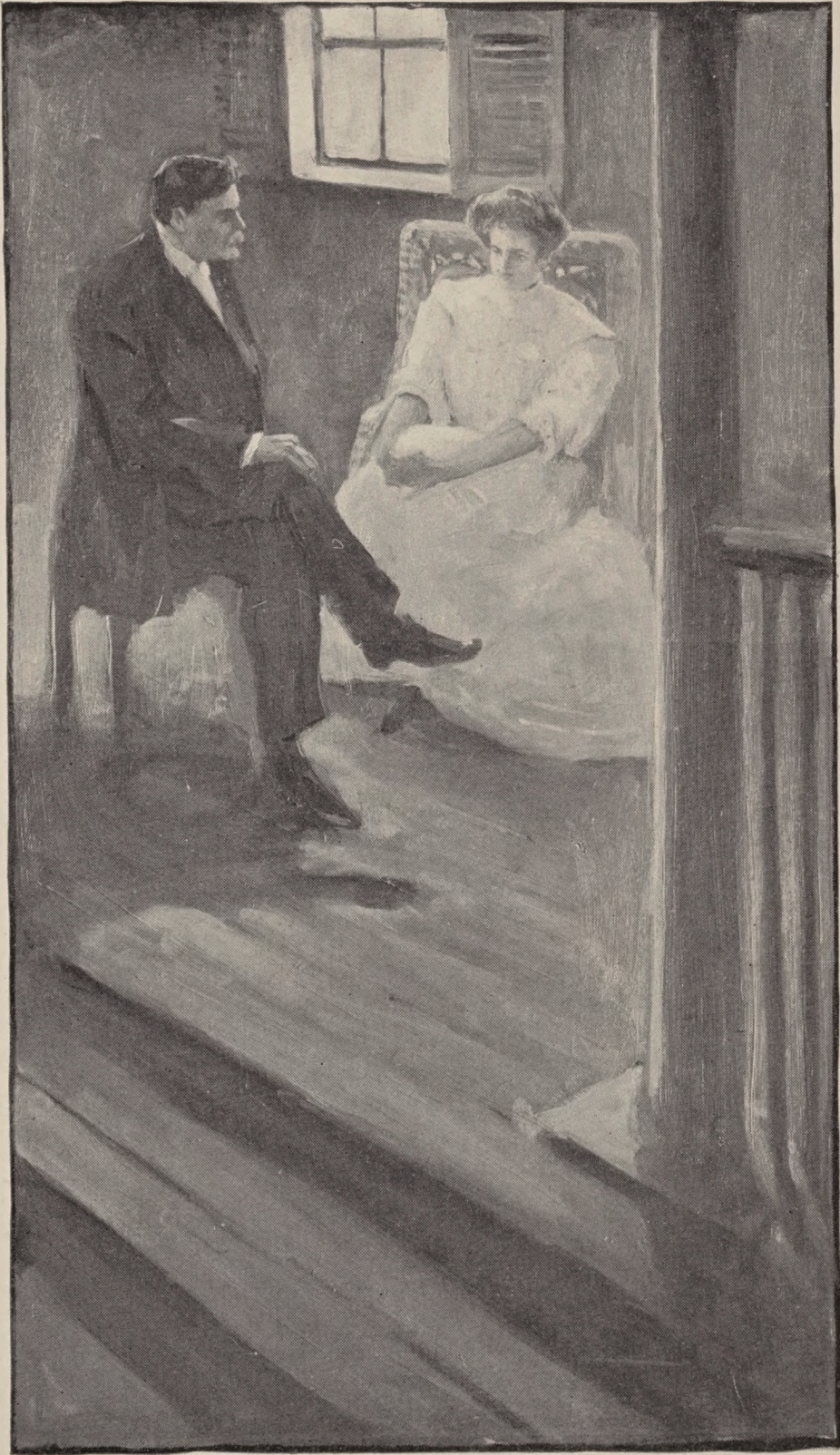
"I was thinking of a friend's definition of hard times and I'm of his opinion."

"Tell me, and let's see what I think about it," urged Ena.

"In the first place, he says that hard times are a psychological phenomenon, a state of feeling where the spirit of man turns cold and cautious. He distrusts everything and everybody, and will not venture. He loses his cheering faith in favors of fortune. It is then he turns to the quick way to succeed. See, for instance, an innocent boy working hard and long for fortune to favor him, until, at last, he becomes discouraged. He learns a trick or two at cards; success follows his efforts and he becomes a confirmed gambler. He has cultivated an appetite for a short cut to success. But, if the poor fellow but knew it, his newly-made fortune will be soon swept away. But, as my friend says, 'hard times' is a very discouraging road to travel."

"What's the matter, Aldrich?" laughingly asked Mr. Lindsley. "Are you down on your luck?"

"Yes," he returned, "it is so confoundedly inconvenient to be poor."



Looking at her as he said this, he thought how her charm for him was growing.

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"Indeed it is," agreed Ena; "but, when a man has health, strength, and ability, it seems to me that he ought to surmount the difficulties which encumber his path and rise in the scale of fortune."

"But, Miss Ena, there are so many temptations tugging at a fellow to pull him down, that human nature sometimes grows discouraged," protested Mr. Aldrich.

"The man who admits a stumbling block, in my opinion, is very weak," she retorted.

"You are so decided in your condemnation of us poor fellows, Miss Ena, that you leave no loophole whereby we can excuse ourselves."

Looking at her, as he said this, he thought how her charm for him was growing, always appealing to him with a touch of delicate originality, always shifting and changing with a thousand fleeting lights and shadows; because there was an ephemeral quality about her, constant only in bewitching inconsistency. He was driven over and over again, in her remarks, to note the sense of novelty, of refined surprise, and of quickened observation that was produced. Ena, he thought, when pleased and desirous of pleasing, was undoubtedly a being created to be fallen

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in love with, and this he had done.

The silence that had fallen on them was broken by Ena:

"I was so amused, not long ago, at a sheepherder who was here. I was talking to him and the conversation drifted to that paper which so many of you men patronize in this part of the country. Can you guess the name?"

"The one David Madden was showing you the last time I was here?"

"Yes; 'The Heart and Hand,' I believe it is called. Well, this man said he answered an advertisement and began a correspondence with a lady; finally, he proposed and was accepted. The next thing was to send her money to come out with. This he did, and they were to know each other by a handkerchief being tied on the left arm. The day arrived on which she was expected, and he was at the depot to meet her; but, as he wished to see what she looked like before letting himself be known, he neglected the signal of recognition. She was there all right, he said; but, when he saw her, he exclaimed, 'Great Scott,' and took to his heels.

"What did you do that for?" I asked.

"Why, Miss Ena," he replied, "she was

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old enough to be my mother.'

"I could not resist laughing, but I also chided him for leaving her in the lurch."

"I really suppose she had led him to believe she was young and good-looking," suggested Aldrich.

"That is just the reason he gave me," answered Ena.

"You can't blame him then. If a woman deceives a man on the start, a marriage with her would be bound to prove unhappy. Talking of matrimony, reminds me of what a friend told me once about a girl he was in love with; but he told it in mining language. Would you care to hear it?"

"Certainly, I imagine it would be amusing."

"If not elegant," laughed her companion.

"Well, this is how he commenced:

"'Three years ago, I had a ninety day option on as fine a body of Idaho womanhood as ever did the jigger act over a wash-board.'"

"What did he mean by that?" inquired Ena.

"Why, she was good at washing clothes, I suppose," he answered.

"Well, go ahead. Wait, you don't mind my interrupting you when I don't understand, do you?"

"Surely not. I shall be pleased to explain.

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Then he said that no better article ever emanated from the slopes of virtuous felicity. At one time, they had fully decided to close the deal, in other words to get married; but, before he could get a patent, the ground began to creep."

"Poor fellow," said Ena, "he wasn't very sure of her yet."

"No indeed; but, for the first thirty days, he said, they drifted along in the rarest soft carbonate of human beatitude that ever went over the tram. Then the shade of green crept in, merging into crystallized jealousy, and, before he could timber up the misunderstanding, they had a small cave and the stop was half full of the black oxide of discord."

Here Ena's laughter excited the curiosity of the other occupants of the porch, and Hilder said:

"Do let us enjoy the joke."

"Yes, draw your chairs closer and listen to this matrimonial venture of a friend of Mr. Aldrich. You won't mind repeating the first part for their benefit, will you?"

"Certainly not. You remember Charlie Rushton, Lindsley, and how he was always getting off something comical?"

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"I do perfectly. He is now at Buffalo Hump, I believe."

"He was, the last accounts I heard of him. Well, this is one of his yarns." So, after repeating his narrative, as far as he had reached, he continued:

"After this little cave, they made up and proceeded on their way rejoicing; but, pretty soon the country became rather well sprinkled with the sulphides of mutual distrust. The original locator didn't care to take him into partnership as son-in-law; he sided in with a cowboy."

"Now that was too bad," said Hilder, "particularly if his heart was deeply enlisted."

"I don't think Charlie's heart ever bothered him much. He could fall in love and fall out of it, the quickest of any one I ever saw."

"I can substantiate your opinion of him," agreed Mr. Lindsley.

"Well, anyhow, the cowboy filed an adverse on his application for patent; but, notwithstanding this, he was able to obtain an extension on the option for sixty days."

"That is, I guess, the young lady took him again into her good graces," laughingly explained Ena.

"Precisely so, and, for thirty days, he sunk

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the sulphides of reconciliation; he made a cross-cut, in hopes of striking a ledge of old gold sentiment; but he ran into a conglomerate composed of perversity and disinclination."

"He certainly had a thorny path to travel," interposed Mr. Lindsley.

"I think it was only exciting for him," answered Walter Aldrich. "Occasionally, he said, his stock would boom, then fall with a dull, sickening thud, and then he would climb painfully up the ladder of defeat and humiliation. He was once more encouraged to live by getting into good air. But alas! he followed the trend of susceptibility after the indications of common sense had angled off, and naturally broke into an immense deposit of tough luck. Then he realized, he said, that he would never be able to sit down to a table loaded with domestic glory, but would have to take out his boarding-house dinner bucket with the same old dose, which would cause an angel to weep and drive the devil to suicide."

"Well, what became of the girl?" asked Ena.

"Why, he said he pulled out of the field and the property went into the hands of the

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cowboy receiver.”

“That is one of the best things I’ve heard since I have been in Idaho,” exclaimed Hilder. “Thanks so much, Mr. Aldrich, for our evening’s entertainment.”

“O don’t mention it,” he answered. “My highest aim is to please the ladies, even at the expense of an absent friend’s feelings.” His expression was so droll that it created a general laugh.

CHAPTER XVII

DISMISSION

“LINDSLEY,” asked Walter Aldrich one day, “what is the matter with Arthur Griscom? He has behaved so strangely toward me here lately. You know he and I have always been such good friends.”

“I have noticed his changed demeanor, but I cannot guess the cause.”

“I had a notion, last night, when I was in the store, to tackle him about it, but thought I would await further development.”

“Yes, as the old saying goes, ‘Murder will out.’ You will hear of it soon, I have no doubt.”

From the moment Arthur Griscom saw Ena Graham display her feelings so perceptibly toward Walter Aldrich, he had determined to work for the young fellow’s discharge. He knew he had to act cautiously and feel every inch of his way; but patience, patience, would bring him out victorious. He was fully aware that Walter Aldrich was a general favorite, not only for his amiability of temper,

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but also for his honesty and uprightness of purpose.

He was tall and well proportioned. His features were somewhat large and strongly marked; the nose was aquiline, the mouth hidden under a heavy brown mustache. His jaw was square and solid, his complexion fair. His eyes were rather deep set, under arched eyebrows, real fighting eyes of brownish hue, the pupil small, the iris large and peculiarly rich and clear. Such eyes are habitually kind and friendly, but they can grow very keen when the blood is aroused in anger.

It was in the following manner that Arthur Griscom approached the subject to Mr. Talbot, the largest owner in the Skylark Mine, where Walter Aldrich was working.

"I hear, Talbot, that some of your workmen are giving the property a black eye."

"In what way, Griscom?"

"Why, Walter Aldrich was talking to those experts that came in, giving them the idea that the mine was not what you represented."

"O pshaw, I don't believe it; for Aldrich has worked for me for the past five years, and I never met a more upright man."

"That's just it; he has been there so long that he knows all about the mine and he's

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too honorable to speak favorably of it.”

“What is the meaning of this, Mr. Griscom? Do you mean to insinuate that I lied about my property?” and Henry Talbot’s face took on a very dark expression.

“Here, my friend, not so fast; you jump at conclusions too quickly. Let me explain. You see, when a person wishes to sell anything, he naturally wants it to look advantageous. Now, you would like to dispose of your mine. Is it not right and proper that you should bring out all its good points, letting the experts detect the bad ones for themselves?”

“Well, I acknowledge the truth in that statement. But what has that to do with Walter Aldrich?”

“Only this, he has been exposing what you would rather have hidden.”

“I can’t stand that, I will investigate, and, if what you say is true, I will oust him at once.”

Arthur Griscom rubbed his hands in high glee to know he had planted the seed of distrust in the breast of his hated rival’s employer. Now he could really vouch for what he had said; for, unfortunately, the conversation between the experts and Walter

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Aldrich had taken place in his store, he having paid particular attention to it, for the furtherance of his own plans.

"Now, young man," Arthur Griscom thought, "you won't find it quite so easy to visit the Springs and the girl who loves you," and he ground his teeth at the mere thought.

Mr. Talbot interviewed the experts and found out enough from them to condemn Aldrich, so he ordered Mr. Lindsley to give the young man his time. How he hated to do it! They had been friends so long and he was always to be trusted; but, as superintendent, he was obliged to obey the command.

"Say, old fellow," said Lindsley, as he walked up to the dump where Aldrich was sitting, "I've bad news for you."

"Nothing wrong at the Springs, I hope."

"No, something that concerns yourself. The boss told me to settle with you."

"You're joking, Lindsley. Why, Mr. Talbot and I are on the best of terms."

"Can't help that, my friend, he gave me my orders a short while ago."

"I wonder what the cause of this can be. Well, I will go, but remember what I tell you, Arthur Griscom is accountable for it."

The two friends talked until far into the

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night, then good-byes were said and Walter Aldrich went down the mountain side to Bayhorse. His first intention was to visit the Springs, but this thought he dismissed as being indiscreet; for how could he ask Ena to share his impoverished life? So he determined to write to her, gently hinting his feelings to her. So he did, telling her of his leaving Bayhorse and that he thought of going to Custer. At the end, he quoted a few lines from Julius Cæsar:

“And whether we shall meet again, I know not,
Forever and forever farewell, oh Ena,
If we do meet again, why we shall smile,
If not, why then this parting was well made.”

For hours, he lay awake, not thinking of his lost position, but of the girl he so deeply loved.

“This is awful, this desire of utter self-surrender, this wild worship, this madness of yearning toward the object we love! It lies deeper than any mere gratification of the senses. Philosophers have called it hard names and nearly split their brains over it, trying to solve the problem, trying to bridge the chasm between the me and the not me, the subject and the object. But only the lover, of all men, dares to attempt a solution

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most fateful and desperate, when he thus casts his life down at his sweetheart's feet." Thus he thought, finally dropping off into a troubled slumber, from which he was rudely awakened by the alarm-clock chiming the hour for him to arise.

If only he had caught a glimpse of the grinning visage leering at him from behind the store-doors, as he took the stage, he certainly would have postponed his departure, if only for the gratification of settling accounts with Arthur Griscom.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHEARING CAMP

BEFORE Walter Aldrich's letter reached her, Ena Graham had gone on her trip to the shearing-camp with Mr. and Mrs. Rainey, and Rosabelle Pettibone. They started in a covered wagon and traveled over a large stretch of country until they came to a deep gulch, where, on either side, rose mountains to a dizzy height.

"Doesn't it look queer to see that green grass extend only half way up that mountain," exclaimed Ena, "while above it the bare rocks pile in pyramidical beauty? O there are mountains worth seeing, those, I mean, of different colors. The base is of ashen hue, farther up they take a purplish cast, then red and yellow intermingle, while the extreme top is capped by everlasting snow."

"Well," said Vernon Rainey, "I have traveled this road for many years and never before noticed the beauty of that mountain range."

"No; it took a Southern girl to point out

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the grandeur of your own country," accused Ena, laughingly.

"Look, Rosabelle; what is that big bird over there?"

"It's a sage-hen, Ena; the mountains are full of them. They are not much good for eating, taste of the sage-brush; but the young are quite fine. Now the grouse are tender and nice tasting, for they feed on berries found in the mountains."

As they proceeded, they saw an occasional jack-rabbit, or a small cottontail would dart across the road.

"You see that bird sitting there as if you could pick her up, Miss Ena?" asked Mr. Rainey.

"Yes; why doesn't it fly? Is it hurt, I wonder?" she answered.

"No, that is what is called a fool-hen; and, if we had time, I could kill it with a rock."

"Is it possible! What do you suppose such a helpless creature as that was created for, without even sense enough to protect itself? Of course, we are taught that everything was made for a purpose; but I wonder why it is called on to occupy a fool's place?"

"As your question is unanswerable, Miss Ena," replied Mr. Rainey, "we shall be

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obliged to let it pass."

Farther on their journey, they came on a peculiar-looking animal, which interested Ena very much. It had short legs and was of a gray color with white stripes on its face. Long hair on either side of its body almost swept the ground. Its face had an expression of great cunning; its nose was long and pointed. It was a heavy-set animal, only about two feet long and very broad, but it stepped lightly enough from place to place.

"That is what we call a badger, Miss Ena," volunteered Mr. Rainey; "and all these holes you see around here belong to them."

By this time, the wagon had descended into low, but very rough and barren hills, where there was no grass, only sage-brush here and there. Sometimes a hill was capped by a broad slab of stone, and again, some were pointed. Soon they found themselves in a canyon, shut in on one side by a high wall of rock and on the other by a mountain dotted with pine-timber.

"There are some mountain-sheep on those mountains," said Mr. Rainey, and he pointed out the tracks. Farther on in the rolling valley were to be seen some antelope feeding.

"What makes those mountains look gray,

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Mr. Rainey?" asked Ena. "They shine almost like silver and in some places look black."

"The black is the dark green of the growing pine-timber, Miss Ena, and the gray is where it has been burnt and is dead."

Leaving the main road, they cut across a flat, to where a branch road led into the mountains.

"I can see the white canvas tents," exclaimed Rosabelle, "and the sheep-wagons. It looks like a little village, Mr. Rainey; there are so many of them."

"Some belong to the shearers," he answered. "Those to the right are ours, and the sheep-wagon on the left is your property, your house on wheels."

As they drove up to the tent and alighted from the wagon, Ena said: "Come, Rosabelle, I am dying to have a look into that sheep-wagon." So she stepped upon the tongue and into the door of the herders' winter quarters.

"O look here! Is it not cosey? See, there is the place for the bed, and on each side are benches for the convenience of the herder. This must be his cellar," and Ena slid the door back and looked under the bed. "Here

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is the place for the stove. Is it not splendid? Such a vast improvement on a tent!"

"Yes, everything looks so snug that we might almost envy the person who occupies it," answered Rosabelle.

The herders and the men whom Mr. Rainey had employed to help him, independent of shearers, had finished their noon-day meal, so the visitors had a jolly luncheon all to themselves, occupying the remainder of the afternoon in arranging things for their night's rest.

When the girls entered the tent to assist Mrs. Rainey with supper, what was their surprise to find a long table with benches on each side and a cook-stove.

"This certainly was not my idea of camping, Mrs. Rainey," said Ena, laughingly. "From what I have heard and read, campers were obliged to cook on a fire out doors and spread their repast on the ground. I never imagined any such comfort as this."

"Well, you see, Ena," replied Mrs. Rainey, "I tried that sort of a thing the first time I came with Mr. Rainey, and it was very discouraging. The pot of potatoes turned over, spilling the contents, almost put the fire out and scattered the cinders in every direc-

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tion. The oven bread wouldn't bake, and, when Mr. Rainey came over to see how I was progressing, he found things in a disastrous condition and I was in tears. He turned to and got the meal himself, saying he would have a stove brought up for me. Since that time, I have never been without that convenience."

"Yes," put in Mr. Rainey, "I shall never forget that scene, and would have enjoyed it immensely, had not Helen been so worried. Now, Miss Ena, she is not satisfied with the comforts of life; she has to have the luxuries in the shape of a rocking-chair."

"Well, I am sure of one thing: you enjoy the many good things I bring," insinuated his wife.

"That's even so, my dear," he admitted as he left the tent.

After supper, as Rosabelle was looking out of the tent-door, she saw some men gathering wood.

"O that's fine! See, Ena, they are going to build a fire. It will be so cosey and comfortable, for the evening has grown chilly."

"Yes," explained Mrs. Rainey; "we have fires every evening. After the sun goes down here, it is always cold."

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Seated near the genial warmth of the glowing camp-fire, Ena thought that nothing could excel her enjoyment; for each of the party contributed something to the evening's entertainment, and, as the clock neared the hour of eleven, they all retired.

CHAPTER XIX

AN INTERESTING SIGHT

TOWARD morning, the girls were rudely awakened by a most unearthly sound.

"O Rosabelle! What is that?" exclaimed Ena, starting up in the bed. "It sounds as if pandemonium had been let loose."

"It seems you have forgotten where you are," laughingly said her friend. "It's only the sheep making that racket. The men are trying to drive them into the corral, so they can be put in the pens to be sheared. The ewes and lambs do not relish the idea of being separated. Don't they make a terrific noise?"

"I should say so. Their lungs are surely good and strong," replied Ena.

The girls performed their toilet, then went to assist Mrs. Rainey prepare the morning meal.

"Come, girls," said their hostess, "let us go and watch the men put the sheep into corral, for they won't come to breakfast until they have driven them there."

The trio crossed a small creek, walking

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over to where the pens were. There the men had a long piece of burlap stretched, and with this they encircled a portion of the sheep. Sometimes the ewes and lambs would jump over the burlap and get away; then it was that the men would give vent to their warm feelings in explosive language. When, at last, they succeeded, the sheep were driven through a chute, where the sheared ones were let out and the others driven into the pens. Then the men were ready for their meal.

In the afternoon, the girls watched the shearing-process. Some of the sheep would lie perfectly motionless, while others flounced about terribly. After watching closely for a while, Ena said:

"Those poor sheep have good cause for their restlessness; see how dreadfully they are cut."

"Yes; is it not a shame? The shearers ought to be more careful," answered Rosabelle.

The girls watched the men tie the fleeces into a bundle, then throw them into a baler, where a man would jump in and trample them down; then the wool was pressed into the bale.

"Baling wool is something on the order of cotton bales in the South," said Ena; "only

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you cover the ends of the wool bales and those of the cotton bales are left open.”

“I have heard that mentioned before,” answered Mr. Rainey, as, with his long needle and fleece twine, he kept busily at his work.

Toward evening, the girls walked up the high hill overshadowing the tents. On reaching the summit, they saw a grand panorama. There, below them, was the creek, which took its rise from far up in the mountains, being fed by innumerable springs that jutted out from beneath the rocks; the water came rushing down, dancing, sparkling, over the stones, the sunlight touching it here and there as it filtered through the branches of the willows on the water's bank, making it radiant with many colors. The long, waving grass grew everywhere, except where the corrals stood, making that spot resemble a desert, so devoid was it of any color. The white tents, dotted here and there, added to the scene, making the whole one of wondrous beauty.

As the girls proceeded on their walk, Ena suddenly exclaimed:

“O Rosabelle! See that dog after that poor little lamb; he will surely kill it.”

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"Why, that isn't a dog, Ena; it is a coyote, and, fortunately, the herder is after it."

The girls watched the scene with breathless interest; they saw the man creep cautiously as near as prudence would allow, then raise his gun and fire, killing the coyote.

"He's a good marksman," remarked Rosabelle; "for those animals are hard to shoot."

"They are pretty creatures," answered Ena; "it is a pity they are so destructive. Let us go and have a look at it."

As they were examining the animal and talking to the herder about it, Mr. Rainey joined the group.

"You've done well, Casey," he said to the herder. "I'm always glad to see the death of one of those tormenting creatures. If it were not for them, we sheep men would have nothing to fear in this part of the country, Miss Ena, for mountain-lions or bears trouble us very little. The safest way to kill coyotes is by poisoning, yet it has its disadvantages; for, by it, we lose so many valuable dogs."

"I am not at all surprised, then, that you hail with delight their disappearance forever."

The following day, as Ena was getting some water from the creek, she saw a small boy lying flat on the ground with a string in

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his hand, to which a slip knot was attached. This he placed over a small hole. Curiously, she watched him, and soon she saw a little creature poke its head up. Quick as lightning, the child drew the string and caught it about the neck.

“What have you there, little boy?” she asked.

“A ground-squirrel.”

“What will you do with it?”

“I put them in a large can, then, when I have plenty of them, I like to see them fight to get out. When I am tired of that, I let them go.”

Ena was so interested that she called Rosabelle and the two girls spent the entire afternoon with the little fellow, taking part in the childish sport.

CHAPTER XX

A NARROW ESCAPE

THE TIME passed pleasantly for the two girls at the camp. They had been there a week, when one afternoon they decided to walk to the head of the creek.

"Have you a rifle, Mr. Rainey, to let me have?" asked Rosabelle. "We are going up in those mountains and I always feel safer when I am armed."

"O Rosabelle, can you shoot?" gasped Ena, and her big eyes opened wide with astonishment; for she was afraid even to touch an unloaded gun.

"All Western girls have that accomplishment, Miss Ena," answered Mr. Rainey. "Yes, Rosabelle, there is a good gun in the corner of the tent, and Mrs. Rainey will give you some cartridges."

"Thank you," she said. Then turning to Ena: "You will have to help carry it."

"All right, if it does not grow too heavy," consented the girl.

They started off, going along the bank of



Placing it to her shoulder she fired.

A Narrow Escape

the creek, which took them up into the very heart of the mountains, where the thick timber grew in abundance.

"Let's stop here and rest, Ena," said her companion.

"I should think so, for I am dreadfully tired of carrying this heavy old thing. I can't see what you brought it along for, anyway; it has been a regular nuisance," grumbled Ena, throwing the gun on the ground.

"It's true, we have not met anything more formidable than a jack-rabbit," replied Rosabelle, taking Ena's scolding all in good part; "but, my dear, you must not crow until you are out of the woods."

Ena smiled at her friend's good nature, and for some time they chatted gaily, when suddenly the leaves in a tree near them rustled unusually. As they looked up, a terrible sight met their gaze.

"Gracious Powers! What is that thing staring down on us, Rosabelle?" whispered Ena; for two glaring eyes could be seen through the overhanging branches.

"Be still, Ena; it's a wildcat," cautioned Rosabelle, as she quietly loaded her rifle, then, placing it to her shoulder, fired. It was none too soon, for the animal had crouched

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to spring. The girl's aim was true and the cat fell to the ground dead.

A herder, who was near-by, hearing the report, hastened to their assistance. On seeing what had taken place, he complimented Rosabelle on her ability as a huntress.

"I will skin him for you, Miss Rosabelle, and then, when you look at your rug, you will be reminded of the narrow escape you had."

"Yes, it will certainly make me think of it, and will be such a handsome souvenir of the trip."

They watched the man as he deftly removed the lovely covering from the animal, then they took the skin with them.

As they turned to go, Ena picked up the rifle and started off.

"It's my turn to carry that," said Rosabelle, reaching out to take it.

"No; for the unkind way I spoke to you, I shall punish myself by taking this all the way back."

"Nonsense, I won't hear of such a thing. You would be tired out when you reached camp. Come, I'll forgive you, seeing you're so penitent, and we will share the burden."

Ena, putting the weapon aside, threw her

A Narrow Escape

arms about her friend's neck, calling her a dear girl.

The story of Rosabelle's brave act had preceded her, and much praise was bestowed on her.

As supper was in progress, Mrs. Rainey proposed:

"We will finish here by the second of July, then we will be in time for the Fourth in Challis. I hear that they expect to have a good time, and I would like your party, girls, to take luncheon with us, after which you can go to the races."

"That is very kind of you, Mrs. Rainey," said Ena; "but I feel I cannot think of accepting unless you make it a basket affair. I know we will have quite a number from the Springs and it would be an imposition."

"All right, then; but, really, that was not my calculation when I spoke, I can assure you."

"But it is no more than fair," answered Rosabelle.

It was their last night at the camp, and, as the party sat around the warm fire, Ena remarked:

"I hear that the cattle and sheep men around this vicinity are constantly at war

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with one another. Have you ever had any trouble, Mr. Rainey?"

"I surely have not escaped, Miss Ena. Last year, when I came up here to see if things were all right for shearing, a scene of desolation met my gaze. Everything had been burnt to the ground, even my wool-press and dipping-vat."

"Wasn't that a disgraceful proceeding!" exclaimed Ena. "It is so small, to revenge one's self on personal property. Why are the cattlemen so severe?"

"Their principal cause for grief is that cattle will not range where sheep have been; consequently, it drives the former far up into the mountains."

"A sheepman is not responsible for that," answered Ena. "Why don't they have separate ranges? There seems to be country enough."

"Mrs. Rainey will tell you of a fright she received last fall from some cattlemen," said Mr. Rainey, laughingly.

"Indeed I didn't think it so amusing at the time," she replied. "I came out here with Mr. Rainey, as he intended to separate his bands of sheep and to be gone about a week. One day, as I was looking out of

A Narrow Escape

the camp door, I saw a number of men on horseback, all armed, coming toward me. My first thought was of Indians, and how frightened I was! I waited in fear and trembling until they rode up, and was relieved to find that they were white cattlemen. The spokesman came forward, saying:

“‘Is Mr. Rainey in?’

“‘He is not,’ I answered; ‘he’s at one of the herds.’

“‘Can you inform us which?’

“Now I knew very well, but I wasn’t supposed to tell them, so I replied:

“‘He intended to visit all of them to-day. Will you leave your message with me?’

“‘No,’ he answered; ‘our business is with Mr. Rainey personally,’ and with that he raised his hat and they all galloped off.”

“How dreadfully you must have felt,” said Ena, “with all those armed men after your husband.”

“Mr. Rainey’s safety was in their number, for, had there been only one or two, I would have felt that mischief would have been done. However, I could not help being a little uneasy, and, while I was standing there, imagining all sorts of things, one of our trusty herders came, breathless, toward camp.

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“‘O Mrs. Rainey,’ he said, ‘I was sure those men were Indians and I hastened to you; for I knew how very fearful of them you were.’”

“‘That was very kind of you and I appreciate it,’ I answered; ‘but you see they were only a small army of cattlemen.’”

“‘Did they find you, Mr. Rainey?’” asked Ena.

“‘Surely; they went to the ewe band and I wasn’t there, then they came to the wether band. I saw them at a distance; so, picking up my rifle, I started to meet them, thinking that, if the worst came, I would sell my life dearly.’”

“‘You were very courageous, Mr. Rainey,’” interrupted Rosabelle.

“‘Well, you see, my dear, a coward can’t own sheep; for a man has many just such adventures to contend with. But I faced them. I must say they were very angry. Each had a grievance to settle. I listened to them all and then said:

“‘Gentlemen, don’t you think we can settle this matter amicably? I am willing to do what is right.’ Then I laid a plan before them.

“‘They talked, and fussed, and ranted for

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quite a while among themselves. Finally they consented to my proposition and went off, hence my being alive to tell the tale," he ended laughingly.

"Have you been in this business long, Mr. Rainey?" inquired Ena.

"A number of years, Miss Ena, and it has been up hill traveling all the way. My brother and I came to this country with comparatively nothing. We bought a band of sheep, and gave the owner a mortgage on them, paying him eighteen per cent interest. My brother herded while I freighted into Challis, Clayton, and Custer. So, step by step, through many trials and tribulations, we have at last reached Easy Street."

"You have worked hard for it and you deserve prosperity," said Ena.

CHAPTER XXI

FOURTH OF JULY IN CHALLIS

WHEN Ena returned to the Springs, she found Mr. Aldrich's letter awaiting her; so, putting on her hat, she walked to a shady grove, where she might enjoy its contents alone. Tremblingly she hoped for a declaration of his feelings toward her, for well she knew that her heart was in his keeping. But what cared she? Was he not honest, upright, generous, and true? Had she not studied his character in every way, looking at it from all sides, never finding a taint of selfishness or an intimation of dishonesty in his nature? Her opinion of him was so exalted that she thought not even adversity could force him from the path of integrity, nor disappointment warp his rectitude of purpose or embitter his kindly spirit. But, as she opened the missive, a feeling of bitter disappointment stole over her; for the letter was only a friendly one, telling of his discharge and other things he thought would interest her. She found some consolation, however, in the quotation.

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He had called her "Ena," showing his thoughts were affectionate and of her.

"He has asked me to correspond, so I will have his letters to comfort me," and, with this thought, she wended her way back to the house, where she found Fanny and Hilder preparing the lunch for the next day.

"Who are going to Challis to-morrow?" she asked.

"Well, as some of the boarders are to remain here, I will have to stay at home," said Fanny, "and really I do not care to go. As Clara says she won't leave Mamma, she will keep me company; but Richie wants to go, so does Mr. Lindsley." Here Ena gave Hilder a knowing look, which said: "He's here, is he?"

"Mrs. Rainey has invited us all to picnic with her, going from her house to the races."

"That will be splendid, she has such pretty grounds to eat in. Now, Herbert," Fanny continued, as her husband made his appearance, "you must start early so that the girls won't miss seeing the Liberty Car, which parades at nine o'clock."

"What is that you speak of, Fanny?" asked Hilder.

"Wait and see, and you will appreciate it

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more," suggested her sister.

"All right, Fanny," agreed her husband; "see that your womenfolks are on time. There is where the danger lies."

"Herbert delights in giving us a hit every chance he gets," said Ena, as her brother-in-law disappeared. "I guess you heard of Mr. Aldrich's losing his position in Bayhorse," she continued.

"Yes," answered Hilder, "Mr. Lindsley was telling us about it; but he says that his friend does not regret it, for he has a much more lucrative one in the Lucky Boy Mine in Custer."

"I am pleased to hear that," said Ena, as she left the room.

"You see, Fanny, my supposition was correct. Mr. Lindsley found out that old Griscom was instrumental in making Mr. Aldrich lose his place."

"Well, I declare; I would not have believed it of him," answered her sister. "But unrequited love will change the best of them. So he took his revenge out on Walter Aldrich because he thought Ena liked him."

"Nevertheless, it was a low, dirty trick; but that man is equal to anything mean and contemptible."

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"I perceive your opinion of Mr. Griscom is not very exalted, Hilder, so I won't attempt to shield him; but, as a boarding-house keeper, I must stand on neutral ground," remarked Fanny.

The following morning dawned bright and beautiful. The sun shone his appreciation of the celebration, as the party left the Springs and forded the Salmon River, going up the gradual ascent to the town of Challis. As they entered Main Street, the whole place was in holiday attire; every store had trees of evergreen before it and from the top of houses waved flags.

"How pretty everything looks!" said Hilder.

"Why, yes," remarked Mr. Drisco; "the spirit of patriotism is felt even here."

"So I perceive from the display before us," she replied.

"This is the place from which the car starts," commented Mr. Drisco, "so you folks can dismount."

They alighted on the platform and soon some of their acquaintances came forward and spoke to them. It was not long before the Liberty Car appeared, driven by a representation of Uncle Sam. The wagon had tiers of seats and on the top was a high pole.

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The Southern girls were all attention as to what would come next. Soon they saw a number of little girls, all robed in white, with ribbon sashes tied about them on which were printed, in gold letters, the names of the states and territories. In the midst of these was a larger girl, who represented the Goddess of Liberty, with her long, flowing hair. They were assisted to their seats; the Goddess stood holding the pole for support.

"What a lovely sight!" exclaimed Ena. "I don't think I ever beheld anything more beautiful."

"Nor I either," added Hilder; "no wonder Fanny didn't want us to miss it."

The Challis women were well pleased that their efforts were appreciated by these strangers. After the car had passed up one street and down another, with a marshal on horseback preceding it, the children were driven to the starting point and taken off the wagon. Games followed this. There were foot-races, for young and old; climbing the greased pole for a five-dollar bill, which was on the top; catching the greased pig, which was really ridiculous; a sack-race, a wheelbarrow and a potato-race—all of which delighted the two Southern girls.

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It was after twelve o'clock when the party assembled at Mrs. Rainey's, finding Rosabelle and John Pettibone there.

"We will be obliged to hurry with luncheon," said Mrs. Rainey; "for the races are at two o'clock."

As the entire party were hungry, they did full justice to the collation spread before them, talking, laughing, and having a jolly good time. As they were getting ready to start, Hilder said to Ena:

"The Pettibones are on horseback and Mr. Lindsley says it is very tiresome sitting a horse during the races, so he proposes that you should ask them to accompany you in the wagon and we will go in a hired rig."

The ruse was so plain that Ena was convulsed; but she only answered:

"How nice of him to be so thoughtful of other people's comfort."

"You are a mean thing," said Hilder, blushing; "but wait, maybe some day I can repay you in your own coin. But, anyhow, it's a go? Quick, he is awaiting an answer."

"Of course, it is a splendid arrangement." So Ena went in quest of Rosabelle, who, with her brother, was pleased with the change.

The race-track was situated two miles

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from Challis and it was astonishing the number of vehicles that lined the fence facing it.

"I hadn't an idea that Challis contained so many people, Rosabelle," remarked Ena.

"Well, you see they come from miles around, even from the Pahsamari Valley, to view the races."

"They must be worth seeing then," answered Ena.

"We enjoy them, never having seen anything better."

After the running and trotting-races, the one that interested Ena most was the Indian race. Each was wrapped in a gaudy blanket, riding bareback his cayuse. Just before they were to go under the line, a very exciting thing happened. One of the Indians fell from his horse; but the latter kept on and went riderless under the line, winning the race. Such a powwow as they did have! It was comical to see them talking and gesticulating. The row was caused by the judges wishing to give the money to the Indian whose horse had won the race. This the others would not listen to; so, finally, it was decided to run the race again, much to the delight of the spectators, who were really rejoiced to see the same Indian come in ahead.

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One of the happiest persons on the ground was John Pettibone, for he sat beside Ena, and had the pleasure of listening to her voice, which sounded like sweetest music to him. Now she was subdued, then again all excitement. It was positively heaven for this poor fellow, as he was obliged to worship from afar, knowing that a consummation of his dearest hopes was not for him.

The party attended the dance that night, returning home the next day. As John and Rosabelle were riding along, the former said:

“I do wish I had some book learning, Rosabelle, then I might try my luck with Ena Graham; for, to my way of thinking, she is so lovely, so cheerful and light-hearted, she seems to carry sunshine itself in her smile. But ah me! she is not for me.”

His sister's deepest sympathy was aroused for him; she knew he loved the girl with all the strength of his manly nature. But what encouragement had she to offer! She felt that Ena Graham had never given her brother a serious thought.

“Well, John, it is certainly too bad that you would not take advantage of an education when father urged you; but it was of no use, you said you did not want any schooling;

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that mother had none."

"That's jest it. Mother had none and she didn't care if I had none. I think that is jest where the trouble laid. A boy looks up to his mother and thinks what's good 'nough for her, is the same for him. I see'd my mistake now."

"You can study yet, John; I will help you," said his sister, almost ready to cry at her brother's dejected air.

"Too late now, sis; all the larning in the world wouldn't give me the girl I love."

Rosabelle tried to cheer him, by talking on familiar topics, and she partially succeeded, for he seemed in better spirits when they reached home.

CHAPTER XXII

ACCEPTANCE

“WHO’S THAT in the sitting-room with Fanny, Hilder?” asked Ena, who had been over to the bath-house gathering up the towels.

“Mrs. Pettibone; she came to ask Fanny to buy some winter potatoes. I didn’t appear, because I heard her say she was on her way to Challis and couldn’t stay long.”

“Well, I won’t bother about going in to see her either, as she has come on business,” said Ena.

After Mrs. Pettibone’s departure, Fanny came laughing into the room, where her sisters were sitting, and said:

“Well, if that old lady isn’t comical. What do you think she said?”

“Tell us, Fan,” urged Ena. “I know it must be ridiculous.”

“It seems as if Mrs. Spencer and the party who has an interest in the same ditch have been having trouble; so Mrs. Spencer told Mrs. Pettibone about it and this is the advice the latter gave her: ‘If I be you, Mrs. Spencer,

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I'd give him the tail end of the execution, that's jest what I'd do for him, and then see how'd he like it.'"

"What in the world did she mean?" asked Ena, in astonishment.

"Why, the fullest extent of the law," laughed her sister, so heartily that the sound brought her husband to see what the fun was. When he heard it, he joined in.

"O my, she is so funny," said Ena. "When I was at her house spending that time with Rosabelle, she had a very bad headache one day, and, calling to her daughter, she said:

"O dear Rosabelle, you will have to come and rub my head with pneumonia, it hurts me so bad.' As much as the old lady was suffering, we could not help being amused; but, at the same time, it was awfully mortifying for Rosabelle."

"Yes, she seems to feel her mother's deficiency very much," answered Fanny.

Later that afternoon, as Hilder Graham was crossing the lawn, Sonoby Lindsley sat watching her. "What an entire indifference to observation she has," he thought. "There is a certain concentration of purpose in her appearance, which is very impressive. I really think I am in love, desperately in love with

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her. How a man longs to write noble poems on the blank pages of a maiden's book of life, to keep it free from all smirch and stain, from all knowledge of sin, shame, and sorrow. What a passion of reverence mingles with the love of an honest man for a pure woman, which makes the most exquisite, perhaps, of all human sentiment. He is the first that ever bursts into that 'silent sea,' and in that thought there is, for certain natures, positive rapture, and aroma fresh as that of mountain flowers, a living delight, as in the breath of the wind of morning. I shall know my fate to-night; but Heaven spare me one like Griscom's."

True to his thoughts, Sonoby Lindsley asked Hilder Graham to be his wife and was accepted. There was great rejoicing when she made known her secret, for he was a general favorite.

The days passed and each brought fresh pleasures and surprises to these two Southern girls. It was now November and the snow fell like a white covering over everything. One would have supposed they were, indeed, children, so eagerly did Hilder and Ena play in it with Fanny's little ones.

"By the time you've been here three or four

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winters," said their brother-in-law, "you won't take quite so much pleasure in the 'snow beautiful.'"

Just then an unexpected snow-ball struck him full in the face and a laughing voice said:

"Take that, you old croaker."

Looking up, he perceived Ena.

"I'll fix you for that, miss," he said, as he made a dive for her; but she was too quick for him. She ran into the house, slamming the door and locking it, then looking out of the window at him, with a "catch-me-if-you-can" expression on her face.

"You are a coward," he said; "come here and let us fight it out."

"Not much of it. I've always heard that discretion is the better part of valor, so I'll remain where I am for the present."

Seeing that Mr. Drisco had left, she came out to enjoy herself. Looking down the road, she exclaimed:

"Look, Hilder, there comes David Madden. Now we will hear some wonderful tales. I do enjoy listening to them, though, for he has traveled considerably and some of his experiences are thrilling."

"Yes, and he is a good narrator, so we will ask him to oblige us by telling us a story

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to-night," answered Hilder.

As he approached, Ena walked to meet him.

"Here I am again, Miss Ena. Can't stay away for long; there seems to be a loadstone drawing me in this direction."

"Why, of course," Ena replied, with a demure look, "you are the gentleman who is so fond of fishing."

"Yes, I am he; but, unfortunately, I fish for trout and catch nothing but suckers."

"Now that is too bad. I wish you better luck next time," returned Ena.

"Well, say, can't you get up a four-handed game of croquet, if it's not too cold? I am perishing to play; but, mind you, I want you for a partner or the game don't go."

"All right," she answered, as she went in search of Hilder and Mr. Lindsley.

"O bother croquet," the latter said. "We enjoy it more where we are; besides, there is snow on the ground."

"Not where we play croquet. It has all melted and, moreover, sir, you must not be so selfish. There was a time, if I remember correctly, when a certain gentleman of my acquaintance loved to play the game; but, of course, circumstances alter cases."

"Well, you rogue, we will play one game,

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and then I'll wager that even you will wish to leave it for a comfortable fireside. What say you, Hilder?"

"I'm agreeable," she answered.

They played two games, then all were ready to stop; for the air was frosty and cold.

"Come into the sitting-room after supper, Mr. Madden, with the rest of the gentlemen; for we wish you to entertain us."

"Well, now, that's fine, giving me the place of story-teller. The fault will be yours, Miss Ena, if I go below for it."

"I won't shoulder such a responsibility, Mr. Madden; we want something strictly true."

"You'll have to get some one else in my place then," he said, as he walked away.

CHAPTER XXIII

PURSUING INDIANS

THAT NIGHT, as they all gathered around the warm stove, Ena said they were ready to listen to anything Mr. Madden would choose to relate.

“What subject will be most interesting to you?” he asked.

“Indians,” said Ena. “I thought that this place would be full of them and we should have such startling and thrilling adventures to write South about; but I was badly mistaken and really disappointed. I’ve only seen a few red men and they were as peaceable as doves.”

“I have had one rather narrow escape from Indians, which I will tell you of. My partner, whose name was Jim, and myself were out prospecting in Arizona, and, having found a good thing, we were working at it like beavers. But one evening, as I was enjoying my paper, which I was reading by the flickering light of a candle, Jim came hurriedly in, exclaiming:

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““David, we must pull our freight!”

““Why this desperate hurry, Jim?” I questioned.

““The Apaches are on the war-path. They have already killed four prospectors and are bearing down in this direction as fast as cayuses can carry them.”

“Even while he was speaking, he was hustling around, gathering up what few things we could manage to carry on the backs of our ponies. I arose to assist him and together we got our frying-pan, sack of flour, coffee, and side of bacon; while, armed with repeating rifle, pistol, and bowie-knife, we started out to saddle our horses.”

“I can imagine how you felt, David,” said Mr. Preston, another miner.

“All over in spots, with the cold shivers running up and down our backs—not a very pleasant sensation, I can assure you. Well, silently and swiftly, we proceeded on our journey, fearing every moment that some hideously-painted face would rise up in the path to greet us, or some swift and never-erring arrow would fly through the silent midnight air to find a resting-place in our bosoms.”

“O how dreadful!” exclaimed Ena, with a

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shudder. "The wonder is that you both didn't die of fright."

"It takes something more tangible than fear, Miss Ena, to kill tough old miners like us," laughingly said David. "Well, to continue: morning dawned and a glimmer of the sun's rays rose above the tops of the mountains. We breathed freely, for we had encountered no ill the night previous; so we hoped that the noble red man had taken some other direction to pursue his vengeance on the intruders of his vast domain. But, while we were enjoying our flapjacks and drinking our coffee, one of our own pack-animals galloped past.

"'David!' exclaimed my partner, starting up in horror, 'we are not safe yet; those varmints are after us.'

"The terror of the situation took possession of me, for a moment, and I shook from head to foot; but, controlling myself with an effort, I said to Jim:

"'We must get rid of the horses.'

"'Yes,' he answered.

"Now we knew it was of no use to try to outride them; for they would shoot the minute they caught sight of us. Fortunately, there was a mountain stream running past, with a

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high bank on our side. Down this steep decline we forced our animals; for we knew if the Indians saw them, they would naturally think we were with them. We took one longing look at our half-eaten breakfast, and, stepping in the hoof-prints of our horses, we scampered down the bank. My, but that water was cold! We waded quite a distance before finding a hiding-place. Finally we came to a cave hollowed out of a big rock, where the water didn't reach; here we sat, shivering and waiting. What seemed an eternity to us was in reality only a short time, when we heard those wild Indians coming at breakneck speed, then stop suddenly, and give forth such a war-whoop that it positively made the ground tremble.

“‘They have discovered our stopping-place,’ whispered Jim.

“‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘and now they must be holding a council, they are so still.’

“Suddenly they gave another yell and all of them plunged down the bank and into the water; for they had seen our horses.”

“That was a brilliant idea of yours regarding the horses,” interposed Lindsley; “it certainly saved your lives.”

“Yes, thought travels quickly when we are

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in danger," answered David Madden. "When we saw that the Indians had gone, we came out of our hiding-place and walked ten miles to another prospector's camp, where we ate and slept that night, going the following day to a small mining-town."

"That was absorbingly interesting and exciting," said Ena, "and we thank you for telling us the story."

"Not at all, Miss Ena," replied Mr. Madden; "for I really enjoy relating it, sitting where I am now."

At which the rest of the company smiled.

"Speaking of Indians," said Lindsley, "I remember once coming upon a friendly tribe in New Mexico."

"Tell us your experience," said Hilder.

Answering her with a smile, he commenced:

"A friend and I had been out hunting and lost our way. In trying to find it, we came across this Indian village. We had our field-glasses, and, as we looked down from the summit of the hill, we saw a company of Indians standing on a high wall, which surrounded their houses. I made this remark:

"Those are not Apaches, but I have no idea to what tribe they belong. This I do know, that the main road passes within

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twenty yards of that wall and that is what we have been hunting for these past two hours. Shall we take it or push on through the mountains? For now we will make for the Government Post.' He thought a while and then said:

"We had better take the road, and, as I know you are dying to have a powwow with those Indians, we will inquire the distance to the Post.'

"Now, I laughed at this, for he was really jealous of my ability to speak Spanish."

"Why, you never told me you were that talented," broke in Hilder.

"You don't expect him to tell you all his accomplishments at once, do you, Hilder?" chided Ena.

At this, her sister became very much confused, and, to shield her, Mr. Lindsley continued:

"We went toward the wall, and an Indian waved his hand at us. We reined in our horses, and, as we did so, a venerable man came forward with outstretched hand. I grasped it cordially, for he had a trustworthy face; but my friend pretended to be busy with his saddle and ignored the proffered hand. At this, the old chief seemed hurt.

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“‘Can you direct us to the Post?’ I asked in Spanish.

“‘You go road, heap long way, grass no good; you go trail, heap short way, lots grass, lots water, heap good way.’

“‘But we do not know the trail,’ I answered.

“‘Little way, down road, see trail that way,’ indicating the direction by a wave of his hand.

“Turning to my companion, I repeated the conversation.

“‘Are you going to trust him? For all we know, there may be a company of them lying in ambush waiting to kill us.’

“‘Nonsense,’ I answered, ‘they have a good chance for that right now, if such were their intentions.’

“The old man knew, although he could not understand us, that my friend mistrusted him, for he said:

“‘He no like me.’

“I pretended not to have heard him. Then he said again:

“‘You go with me there?’ pointing to the wall.

“Before answering him, I told my friend what he said, telling him of my intention to accept the invitation, for I was curious to see what was in that inclosure; but he refused.

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"I would have been like your friend," said Ena, "afraid to trust them that far."

"Well, I am glad, now, that I went, for it was really interesting. As we started off, I noticed that the old chief was always followed, at a respectful distance, by a number of young braves. We climbed the wall, which was eight feet high, by means of a ladder. On reaching the top, what was my surprise to see one of the Indians lift the ladder and put it down in a large opening in the roof of a house."

"I guess you felt rather queer," suggested Hilder, "when you thought your last chance of freedom was being taken away."

"I can't but acknowledge I did, but as I had gone that far, I would not show the white feather. So, when the old man descended, I followed, finding myself in a long room, in one side of which was a large fireplace, where they cooked their meals. In the top of the room was a long pole, where they hung their blankets in the morning when they went to work. The old chief motioned me to be seated on a sheep pelt beside him, telling a young squaw to prepare us something to eat.

"It was interesting to watch her prepare

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a thin cake of Indian corn and flour, and cook it on a hot stone. Then she made coffee from the coffee bean. When all was ready, she placed it before us. In the meantime, the old chief entertained me with incidents which had occurred to him in the past. When we finished our repast, he escorted me around the village. We stopped at a large room in the center of it and I asked its use. He said that many moons ago there was a great drought and all the corn was killed and many Indians died. Since then, each year, they used the old corn, replacing it with the fresh crop.

“By this time, my friend was becoming impatient, so, after thanking the chief for his kind hospitality, I mounted the wall and went toward him. As we were riding along, I related to my companion my experience. I was especially struck with the way the women of the tribe were treated, so differently from the Apaches. Why, I have seen an Apache squaw carrying a bundle of wood on her back under which even a donkey would have staggered. On reaching the trail, we debated whether we should take it or the road. After much demurring on the part of my friend, he consented to take the former and we

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reached the Government post in safety."

"That certainly was an adventure," said Hilder, "and you showed your courage to trust to that old Indian."

"Don't, Miss Hilder, flatter him too much," said David Madden; "for he is even now a little proud of himself."

"Now, that's pretty tough, David; but one consolation, there are others."

"I move that we retire," said Ena, "or I shall be fighting Indians in my dreams."

"To avoid such a dreadful catastrophe," said David Madden, "we will say good night."

CHAPTER XXIV

LOST ON THE FLAT

IT WAS nearing Christmas time, and, as the ground was covered with snow, it made sleighing most delightful.

"Say, girls," said their brother-in-law, "would you like to have a sleigh-ride to-day? I'm going to Challis and would be glad of your company."

"That'll be splendid!" exclaimed Ena, clapping her hands in very ecstasy of delight.

"Our first sleigh-ride, just think of it!"

"Me go, too, Mamma," said little Clara.

"Why, yes, let the youngsters come," said their father. "I know the girls won't mind."

"Not a bit," answered Hilder; "we will love to have them."

By ten o'clock, the party started off in high glee, sleigh-bells ringing and merry laughter could be heard far down the road. Mrs. Drisco smiled at their enjoyment as she busied herself about her work. She was a woman that rarely cared to leave home, and, if she did, she would worry about something

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going wrong while she was away.

The boarders had finished their dinner and Mrs. Drisco was clearing things up, when Rosabelle Pettibone walked in.

"How are you, my dear?" she welcomed her. "Take this chair. I see you have taken advantage of this lovely day to be out. I'm sorry, but you will have to be entertained by me, as the girls have gone with Herbert and the children to Challis."

"That's too bad; but you are a very good substitute, Mrs. Drisco," replied Rosabelle, as she took the towel and commenced drying the dishes.

"That is all unnecessary," objected Mrs. Drisco. "You sit down and talk while I finish these."

But the girl only smiled at her and continued the work.

"I came down to-day, Mrs. Drisco, to invite you all to a surprise party to be given at Mrs. Robinson's on Friday night. It will be a basket-affair and I think we'll have a good time."

"I feel sure of that, Rosabelle; for they have such a fine large house. The girls will enjoy it, too; Ena was asking me the other day, why they didn't have some of those

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ranch dances I used to write so much about.”

“They are just commencing,” answered Rosabelle; “and we’ll have plenty of them before the winter is over.”

“Has your mother any rutabagas and carrots for sale, Rosabelle?” asked Mrs. Drisco.

“I believe she has; but I will ask her and let you know the night of the dance.”

Thus they continued conversing on the subject of gardening and ranch life in general, until Rosabelle rose to leave. Soon after her departure, Fanny heard the jingle of sleigh-bells and knew the travelers were returning home.

“O what a grand time we have had, Fan!” exclaimed Ena, as, with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, she jumped from the sleigh.

“It certainly seemed to agree with you all,” she answered, “judging from your looks.”

“Yes, Mamma,” said little Clara, “me had a good time, too, me bring ’ou some of my can’y.”

“Bless the child!” exclaimed its mother, as she snatched her little one up in her arms and smothered her darling with kisses. Richie had remembered his mother, too, so he came in for his share of her caresses.

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"My! how those horses did go when we struck the stage-road," said Hilder. "It was smooth as glass. How do they keep their footing so well, Herbert?"

"They have shoes made for the purpose, what is called sharp-shod," he replied.

"Well, I thought there must be something out of the ordinary to keep them from slipping," answered Hilder.

"I had a visitor while you were away. Can you guess who?" announced Fanny.

"Mrs. Pettibone," suggested Ena.

"Not exactly, but some one very near to her."

"O pshaw! I bet it was Rosabelle and we missed her; but I don't think I would have given up my ride even for her," said Ena.

"You have guessed correctly," replied her sister. "She came to invite us all to a surprise party at Mrs. Robinson's; but the children and I won't go. I don't care about dancing, and it will be too cold for them; they wouldn't enjoy it. But if Herbert wishes, he can go with you."

"That was nice of Rosabelle to ask us," said Ena. "But did she say we were to meet at her house, Fanny?"

"No, the ranches are too far apart for that."

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Each party goes alone; but it will be a surprise to the lady of the house. There are two gentlemen here whom we all know very well; maybe they would like to join the party," proposed Fanny.

"We can ask them," said Hilder.

The invitation was gladly accepted; but, at the last moment, Herbert backed out, saying that it was a shame to leave Fanny and the children alone.

"The question now is, whether either of the gentlemen knows the way to Robinson's ranch," said Fanny.

"We can soon find out," answered Herbert, and away he went to the cabin, returning with the information that Lester Blackmore would be their guide and driver.

Friday night came and the party of four started out in a fine cutter. It was a pretty night; the sky, in which the stars and crescent moon shone with a cold, steady radiance, was absolutely clear, and the whole place seemed to sleep in nature's cold embrace. While the horses pranced and the sleigh-bells jingled, the girls could not imagine anything grander. They had six miles to travel and expected to reach the ranch by nine o'clock. Everything was in good condition along the

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main road, but where it branched off, the way was covered with snow and the driver was puzzled. Keeping still for fear of alarming the company, he took the direction that he thought was right. They rode and rode, but could see no signs of human habitation and the girls began to feel the cold. Finally the other man said:

“Look here, Blackmore, do you know your whereabouts?”

“I think I do,” he answered, and continued to drive on; but soon he was obliged to tell the bitter truth.

What was to be done? Out there on that snow-covered plain, with nothing about them but high mountains, resembling white-robed sentinels mocking them, and the dismal cry of the coyote in the remote distance, while it grew colder and colder! To make the situation more appalling, the sky had suddenly become overshadowed with dark clouds and the snow began to fall. The driver cursed himself under his breath for being the instrument that had led to such a predicament. He glanced over his shoulder, thinking he could follow the tracks back; but no, the snow had completely covered them. Just as hope seemed gone, Lester Blackmore exclaimed:



“Look there,” and he pointed to a black object in the distance. “I am sure it is a horseman.”

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"Thank God, deliverance is at hand! Look there," and he pointed to a black object in the distance. "I am sure it is a horseman."

"Suppose it isn't," hinted Ena; "it might only be some animal."

"Don't make such a suggestion, please," said the driver, and the agony depicted in his voice told what the man was enduring. His surmise proved correct, however, and, as the man approached, he was questioned as to where Robinson's ranch was.

"Lost your way, have you? Well, turn around and follow me, for I'm making for the same place."

With heartfelt thankfulness, they followed their guide and reached their destination.

Rosabelle, who had been anxiously watching for their arrival, rushed out to meet them.

"I thought you were not coming," she said, as she kissed both girls. "My, how cold you are! Come in and get warm and tell me why you were so late."

The circumstance was related to her; after the shock had somewhat abated, she exclaimed:

"The booby! Next time he undertakes to pilot a party, I hope he'll know what he's about."

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"Don't censure him, Rosabelle," protested Hilder; "the poor man did his best, and it was really the fault of the snow."

"That's all right, but I don't think it is excuse enough for him, nearly freezing you all to death. He should have acknowledged his ignorance when he left the main road," declared Rosabelle, still indignant at the thought of her friends' suffering.

"If he had," answered Ena, "we would not have been here at all, but have gone home; so you see, dear, things are never so bad that they might not be worse."

"Well, as long as you are both safe, I suppose I must forgive him," said Rosabelle.

By this time, the girls had taken off their wraps, and, turning to put them on the bed, found the latter occupied by a number of babies, shawls, and various other things all heaped together.

"Those young ones will smother," proclaimed Ena; "for see, even their faces are covered."

"No, they won't," said Rosabelle; "they are used to such treatment."

"Come, let's have this quadrille, Miss Ena?" asked John Pettibone. "That'll warm you up."

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"With pleasure," she answered, as she tripped away.

The music of the old fiddler seemed to fit the occasion exactly and the nasal twang of the caller was really amusing, as he called out: "Swing your partners," "All join hands and travel out West," "Cage the Birdie," "Birds hop out and crow hop in, three hands up and around again," and various other changes. It reminded Ena of a regular darky breakdown at an old Southern plantation-home; but she enjoyed it thoroughly.

When day began to dawn, and a number of the guests were leaving, Hilder and Ena thought it was time for them to be going; but the lady of the house insisted on their staying to breakfast. This struck the girls as being rather comical, but, as Rosabelle and John Pettibone remained, they consented also. They had a jolly time, leaving the ranch at ten o'clock.

CHAPTER XXV

HILDER'S MARRIAGE

THE REMAINDER of the winter passed very pleasantly and spring came—not the warm, balmy one of the South, with its budding roses and its singing birds, but a cold, rainy, disagreeable spring, not at all to the girls' liking.

"Well, you see," chided their brother-in-law, "that this comes very nearly being winter still. We are very high up in the air, nearly six thousand feet, and warm weather comes slowly and don't stay long. We sometimes have frost every month in the year. Last August there came a big hail-storm that cut down everything in the garden, and ruined a fine crop of oats. I have seen it snow on the Fourth of July right here."

"Well, I don't think this is such a fine country, after all," Ena replied.

"A person grows used to it," defended Herbert, "and, strange to say, when once you've lived here and go away, there is a longing to return. The place holds a fascina-

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tion that is irresistible."

"It's the climate and mountain scenery," said Ena.

One day, Hilder came into the room where Fanny and Ena were sitting, her cheeks mantled by a vivid blush and her beautiful eyes sparkling as she said:

"Girls, I'm going to tell you a piece of news."

"Something that Sonoby Lindsley has been telling you, I suppose," teased Ena.

"Something that we have agreed upon together, my little sister, and it is this: we have decided to be married on the twenty-second of March."

"Will you be ready by that time?" asked Fanny.

"O yes; I have my entire trousseau made and have only to finish my wedding dress."

"Well, we are willing for you to assume matrimonial felicity," consented Fanny.

So it was settled, and, as the days flitted by, a happier girl could not be found than Hilder Graham. As for Mr. Lindsley, he did such foolish, thoughtless things at the mine, that the owners laughingly said they would give him a "lay off" until after the event was consummated. The wedding day

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dawned beautiful and clear, even warm, and, by eight o'clock that night, the Springs swarmed with guests; for they had made it a public affair. The evening ended in a big dance, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Many and beautiful were the presents the bride and bridegroom received. They took a trip to Salt Lake City, and, on their return, went to the mine where Mr. Lindsley was superintendent.

Walter Aldrich had come to Drisco Springs for the occasion and, one afternoon as he and Ena were sitting on the porch, he said:

"A sad thing happened just before I started from Custer. We had a snowslide."

"Do tell me about it," urged Ena. "I have often heard of them but never have had any described."

"This one came with a tremendous roar. The avalanche struck the surface plant of the mine, and, in a twinkling, all that was left to mark the spot was one of the offices. Below the mine, the mountain side is less steep and the slide lost its motion, to which fact is attributed the saving of twelve men who made the wild ride on top of the slide."

"What a cold vehicle!" said Ena, shuddering.

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"I should say so, but the worst is still to come. The crash came as the miners were coming off the day shift. The slide razed the building and bunkhouse and swept the occupants down almost to the bottom of the canyon, hundreds of feet below. The dead and injured were recovered with difficulty from the debris."

"O, what a dreadful, dreadful thing that was!" said Ena, covering her face with her hands as if to shut out the awful mental picture of such a scene.

"It certainly was," he answered. "You have heard, perhaps, that a slide, as it loosens, gathers boulders, trees, and anything which is in its path, as it thunders down the precipitous sides of the mountain. Well, this one did, and left the ground comparatively smooth."

"I would not like to live in a country where snowslides were of frequent occurrence."

"No, it is not pleasant, the anticipation of such," he answered.

"Has Mr. Griscom been here since I left?" asked Mr. Aldrich.

"No; we have not seen a sight of him. Fanny says that I have been the means of

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depriving her of one of their best customers.”

“Well, he counts for nothing, except in dollars and cents; and the few he let come this way, won’t lessen Mrs. Drisco’s pocket-book much.”

“By the way, there is a question that I have long wanted to ask you,” said Ena. “How did Bayhorse get its name?”

“It was years ago, when Custer County was overrun with Indians, so hostile that white men stayed away. A man, more daring than the rest of his brethren, mounted a large bay horse and passed through the country. On reaching Salmon City, he told of camping one night on a creek, where he saw indications of gold.

“Although nearly a hundred miles away, the country was then so little known and miners were so eager for ‘placers,’ that a prospecting party was soon on its way thither. All they knew about the place was what the unknown man with a ‘bay horse’ had told them, and the description was so plain that they found no trouble in reaching the spot, outside of the hard climbing of the hills, through deep gorges, and fording of the river. Once there, they named the creek and gulch ‘Bayhorse,’ but found no placer

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gold to pay for their trouble. However, there was lots of such game as deer, bears, goats, and sheep."

"It certainly was queer to name a town after the color of a horse," said Ena.

"Well, if you think that is peculiar, how about Ram's Horn Mine? Do you know how it got its name?"

"I do not," answered Ena.

"A hunter was once wandering over the mountains, when he saw a sheep; as the animal was running close to a precipice, he was pierced by a ball from the unerring aim of a rifle and he fell far below. The hunter soon made his way down to the animal and was rewarded, not only by finding a prize of excellent mutton, but the sheep had struck and knocked off some galena ore with his horns. The animal had not only uncovered some of the riches of the mountain, but his horns and the incident suggested the name for the great Ram's Horn Mine, which has since yielded millions in silver, gold, and lead."

"Wasn't that hunter fortunate," said Ena; "but he certainly had queer tools to prospect with."

"Yes, the horn of a sheep," said her com-

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panion, laughingly.

The days glided by only too fast for Walter Aldrich, and there were times when the hot words of passionate love for Ena Graham would rise to his lips and only pride would choke them back; but he felt this could not last. Nature would assert itself and he would know his fate. She must love him, for why should she have refused so many, if her affections were not enlisted? Could they be for him! "O happy thought! If not, I could not marry even her; for, though lips press lips never so fondly and hand clasp hand never so closely and mind meet mind in the fullest illumination of friendship, yet would there be still a measurable distance between us. Contact is not union, though men in all ages have striven to persuade themselves that it is, and hence comes the pain, the anguish, the exquisite bitterness of true love, when it is felt by only one of the contracting parties. But why should I worry my brain with such a terrible thought? I, somehow, feel as if I will never be subjected to such an ordeal."

But he left the place with sealed lips.

CHAPTER XXVI

ROSABELLE'S VISIT

"FANNY, can't I ask Rosabelle to spend a week with me?" pleaded Ena, after Mr. Aldrich had gone and she was feeling lonesome indeed.

"Why, of course; ask Herbert to drive you up this afternoon to Mrs. Pettibone's and bring Rosabelle back with you."

Ena's brother-in-law was agreeable, so, after getting the children ready, the four of them started off in a buckboard. As they proceeded, Ena was struck by the gray monotone of the flat, which was unbroken by any bit of color. The soil, the sagebrush, the dead grass, that had grown the summer previous, were all gray, unvaried except where a great rock or a bush taller than its companions cast a long, black shadow. In the distance were the mountains from whose snowy coverings long fingers of white ran down into the narrow canyons, seeming like white clasps holding the covering close in its place. Scattered on the gray

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plain were horses and cattle, most of them in little herds, but now and then a single animal was seen.

"The flat is not a pleasing sight at this season of the year, Herbert," remarked Ena.

"No, but about two months from now it will take on a much prettier aspect."

"I hope this year, I will be more fortunate in getting those wild geraniums to grow," resumed Ena.

"Fanny has tried to cultivate them many times; but her efforts proved unsuccessful, they simply refuse to grow," answered Herbert.

"They would rather be where nature intended they should, I suppose."

"Yes, to decorate the flat and make it more restful to the weary traveler's eye," said Herbert.

Thus they conversed until they reached the Pettibone ranch. As they stopped at the front gate, Rosabelle ran out to welcome them.

"I'm so glad to see you, just get out and come right in," she said to Ena and the children. "Mr. Drisco, I will have to ask you to drive to the corral, as none of the men are about. You know where to put the horses, don't you?"

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"I think I can find a place, Rosabelle," he replied, as he started the team.

"I have come on an errand similar to the one you came on last summer," said Ena. "I want you to spend a week with me; can't you?"

"I think so, for Mamma can do without me now; there is not much work to do."

"That'll be fine, for I am so lonesome since Hilder has been away," answered Ena.

On stepping into the house, she was greeted by Mrs. Pettibone with open arms.

"Well, jest take off your wraps and sit down. How's Mrs. Drisco? And if here beant the dear children. Come close to the stove, dears; it's kinder chilly this afternoon."

Declining the kind invitation, they both sat down by Ena.

"I came to ask you for Rosabelle for a while, if you can spare her, Mrs. Pettibone," said Ena.

"Well, do tell; of course she can go; and I suppose you two will have a fine time cleaning those russet cabins."

"She means rustic," whispered Rosabelle.

"What's that you say?" asked her mother.

"Nothing very much," answered her daughter with an indulgent smile.

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"By the way, did you hear about that disgraceful trick the dealers played on Mrs. Jones?" asked Mrs. Pettibone of Ena.

"No, what was it?"

"Well, Bill Jones went to the railroad to buy some goods and he sent them up ahead of him. So his wife got a letter from the dealer and in it he said she would find 'bill' inside of the box. Well, she was near crazy. She called to Jim to bring the hatchet quick, that his pa was in one of the boxes. Of course, they thought he was dead as he never said nothing. But, when all the boxes were opened, they found only a piece of paper with the things they owed for on it. I think it was disgraceful. I know if it had been me, I never would have got anything more from those people."

The girls were convulsed; but they dared not laugh, for fear of hurting the old lady's feelings, and, fortunately for them, Mr. Drisco came in and attracted her attention; so she did not notice when they left the room.

Nothing would do but they must all stay to supper. This they did and enjoyed it, too; for Mrs. Pettibone was a splendid cook. After the meal, they had a delightful ride home.

Rosabelle's Visit

Rosabelle had been at the Springs three days, when, one evening, John, her brother, and Bill Davis made their appearance, and said it was their intention to remain all night.

"We are glad to see you," said Ena, as she shook hands with them both; but Bill Davis turned to see how Rosabelle took his coming. She smiled at him, which act was very reassuring. There were some miners at the Springs, too, and with the cowboys, made a jolly company that assembled in the sitting-room that night.

"Won't some one tell us an adventure, either about mines, Indians, or animals?" asked Ena. "I am not particular which, so long as it's interesting."

"As for the latter, Miss Ena, I will leave that for you to judge," said Bill Davis; "but I can tell you about the time we had last winter getting some cows out of a snow-drift."

"Do, Mr. Davis," requested Ena.

"Well, it happened this way: a friend and myself were hunting cattle and we noticed some dark objects moving in a snow-drift a distance ahead of us. My partner said he thought they were cows, so, when we got up to them, sure enough, there stood two critters up to their middles in snow. It was a power-

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ful drift, too, over three feet deep.

"Riding up to them, we soon saw that the cows had calves. They looked cold, hungry, and fierce-eyed, and they shook their heads, angrily, as we pushed our way toward them. We had to break a road with our horses, and then, lassoing the nearest one, we turned our horses and slowly dragged her out. The cow bellowed and struggled furiously and a pitiful, feeble cry came from the hole where she stood. We were obliged to throw a rope over the calf's head and drag it out."

"Seems to me," interrupted Ena, "that would have choked the little thing."

"Not if you are quick about it, Miss Ena," answered Bill Davis. "If you are slow and shut its wind off too long, then you would kill it. Well, we pulled out the other cow and calf and they were soon ready to travel."

"Would they have died if left there much longer?" inquired Ena with keen interest.

"No doubt of it, Miss, they could not have stood it; for the circulation would have stopped, then they would have been a goner."

"Have any of you ever heard of an Indian's Turkish bath?" asked one of the miners.

"No, but we would like to," answered Rosabelle.

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“What they call the sweat-bath is a cure-all warranted by the medicine-man of the tribe, to cure anything and everything, from sunburn to corns. It is taken in a very simple manner. When the Indian feels the languor of disease stealing over his frame, he hies himself to a brook, and, in some convenient place, by the side of a deep pool, builds himself a sweat-house. This house is built of willow and hazel poles, bent like the center wicket of a croquet set. Over these are wrapped skins and blankets, until the place is practically tight. An opening, just large enough to allow a man to crawl through, is left close to the ground, and this opening is covered with a flap, which may be tightly fastened from the inside when desired. When the house has been completed, the patient builds a fire close by and into it rolls a number of large stones, which he heats red-hot. He then retires to the interior of the house, accompanied by no clothes, the hot stones, and a large vessel of water.

“He closes the door, pours the water over the stones, and endures a primitive, but, at the same time, an effective Turkish bath. When the sick man can stand the heat and steam no longer, he breaks from the house,

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followed by a cloud of steam, and perspiration dripping from every pore, and plunges headlong into the ice-cold depths of the pool."

"Why, the sudden change is enough to kill him," said Ena.

"It don't seem to," answered the miner. "The treatment is said to be effective for a great many diseases."

"That accounts for Indians being such a hardy race," said Rosabelle, "when they can endure things like that and yet live."

"Yes, they are blessed with great endurance," answered Mr. Walker, another of the miners. "But they are educated to it from childhood. I know that the Comanche squaws take their children out and put them through a half medical, half disciplinary course of torture, which consists of harrowing up their young flesh with a row of long thorns inserted in a piece of wood. The child that cries or fails to bear its pain in perfect silence, the child that begs to be spared or tries to escape, is always soundly beaten and held up to the public contempt, besides lacking in courage and endurance."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the girls.

"It certainly seems so to us," answered Mr. Walker; "but they take it as a natural

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consequence. One piece of Comanche discipline consisted in making the older children do without sleep or food as long as their instructors thought necessary; and still another, in making them perform hard tasks and run and walk great distances, while depriving them of their natural rest. The boys, of course, were subjected to more severe tests than the girls, but both suffered enough."

"O I'm glad I was not born an Indian!" exclaimed Ena.

"If you had been, Miss Ena," said John Pettibone, "all them things would seem jest right."

"That is true, I suppose," she answered.

CHAPTER XXVII

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

“HERE IS a letter from Hilder,” said Fanny, as she entered Ena’s room; “let’s see what she says.” She opened the envelope and, taking out the missive, read it aloud.

“Good,” said Ena, “they will be here tomorrow. I am so glad, for I am longing to see her.”

“So am I,” answered her sister. “Don’t you think we can manage the grays now, Ena? Then we can drive to the bridge and let Herbert stay at home with the children. Mr. Lindsley will drive back, for we will meet the Bayhorse stage at that point.”

“That is a lovely arrangement, sister mine,” answered Ena.

As Mr. Drisco agreed, the two sisters started off just after their noon dinner, to catch the stage by which Hilder and her husband were to arrive. It was a very joyful occasion, for they had not met since the wedding.

“Well, how is everything flourishing in

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Bayhorse, brother Sonoby?" asked Ena, with a merry twinkle in her bright eyes.

"The place is in the greatest excitement; there is a prospect of selling the big Ram's Horn Mine."

"Do tell us about it," urged Fanny.

"It's too long a story to commence here," said Hilder; "wait until we get home, then Sonoby will gratify your curiosity." So other topics were discussed on their way home.

When comfortably seated in the large sitting-room, Mr. Lindsley commenced his narrative:

"You should see the street of Bayhorse! It has been literally swarming with men of every nationality, the cause of which is a deal that has just been consummated, merging all the smaller mines and prospects in the vicinity of Bayhorse into one big company, and a number of the men standing round owned some of these prospects, and had received a good figure for them. I heard one Italian telling another one that he intended to take his stake and return to Italy, where he had left his wife and children, but his companion was trying to persuade him to spend his money in the saloon."

"O wasn't that contemptible in him!"

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exclaimed Ena. "I do hope that the man remained firm."

"He had, up to the time I left; but, you see, everywhere there are good and bad influences being brought to bear against each other. An English Company had negotiated with the Bayhorse Company to buy the entire property, should their experts find it satisfactory. An immense force of men had been put on and the three thousand ton smelter was running full blast. Things around the camp looked pretty lively, I assure you."

"So I imagine," answered Mr. Drisco; "but continue."

"The English expert, Mr. Walsh, arrived, and the superintendent of the Ram's Horn escorted him through the mine and talked his prettiest. He told the expert what the mine contained. Now this part may not interest the ladies. Shall I continue?"

"By all means," said Fanny; "we are interested in everything connected with a mine."

"The superintendent told him that the mines of that belt were divided into two distinct classes. Their ores occurred as irregular deposits of carbonate and galena: lead-silver ore in limestone and as pronounced

Great Expectations

fissure veins in slate, carrying high grade silver ore. The lead ores carried proportionally less than one ounce of silver to the unit of lead, in some instances carrying several dollars in gold to the ton of ore.

"The expert seemed very much pleased with this explanation and raised the superintendent's hopes considerably by asking:

"'Are there any lead mines among the group?'

"'O yes,' he answered, 'the principal ones occur in the limestone belt three miles below here,' and he explained their nature. 'The greatest advantage to these mines,' he continued, 'is that they are perfectly dry at the bottom. The ore still alternates carbon and oxides.'

"It took the entire day for the inspection of these properties, and, as the superintendent told me afterwards, he had talked himself hoarse in behalf of the Company."

"He ought to have been paid extra for that exertion," said Ena.

"Unfortunately, we all do not get our deserts in this life," answered Mr. Lindsley.

"Well, that night, as Mr. Walsh was wending his way toward the hotel, he was met by the owners of the mines and feasted and fêted

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until the small hours of the morning. After due consideration on the part of the expert, he reported favorably to his London company.

"The enthusiasm of the Bayhorse company was immense. But alas, for great expectations! Before Mr. Walsh's report had reached the company they had sent out another expert and his arrival in our camp struck terror to the hearts of the mine-owners; for, try as they would, they were unable to interest Mr. Eggleton. Even the superintendent failed in this quarter. All this gentleman required was to be escorted through the mines, and, when a suggestion was offered, it was completely ignored. He gathered samples here and there, almost in perfect silence.

"The astonishment of the owners knew no bounds when they saw this expert—earning fifteen thousand dollars a year—go and smelter the ore himself."

"Was that really the case?" exclaimed Mr. Drisco. "No wonder you were all surprised."

"And kept in a state of nervous excitement too, for Mr. Eggleton never ventured even an opinion. At last one of the men asked him what he thought of the outlook.

Great Expectations

The reply was:

““Your timber facilities are fine and your water supply excellent.””

“And not one word regarding the mines!” said Fanny. “How annoying that must have been!”

“It truly was,” answered Mr. Lindsley, “and, during his entire stay, he simply ignored any courtesy which they wished to show him. After reviewing all the mines, Mr. Eggleton left as suddenly as he had appeared. On his arrival in London, the English Company sent a polite refusal of the Bayhorse property.”

“That was discouraging,” said Mr. Drisco. “I suppose the place is a sorry camp now.”

“It certainly is; but the greatest loser, they tell me, is Arthur Griscom. He bought in so many of the smaller claims and now he is almost broke.”

“Serves him right,” said Hilder. “It would please me to see him carrying his blankets out of Bayhorse.”

“For shame, Hilder,” rebuked Ena; “even I would not wish anything so mean, as much as I dislike him.”

“You would, though, and worse, if you knew it all,” blurted out her sister.

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"Why, Hilder," said her husband, "I thought you were not to betray the secret."

"Well, dear, I'm sorry. I just couldn't help it; but he deserves to be told on." So she related the incident regarding Mr. Aldrich's dismissal from the mine.

The look of contempt and scorn depicted on Ena's face could not be rivalled, as she said:

"The horrible wretch! He certainly deserves the worst. Does Mr. Aldrich know these facts?"

"I am sure he guessed it," answered Mr. Lindsley, "but did not trouble himself to investigate matters."

"O how I hate that man!" and the vehement way in which Ena spoke that sentence caused others to smile.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DEATH OF MR. PETTIBONE

IT WAS toward the end of May and, although the first big raise of the Salmon River—caused by the melting of snows in the mountains—had somewhat subsided, the stream was still rushing with maddening force over its rocky bed, and fording was considered dangerous; so, when Mr. Pettibone declared his intention of doing it, they were all horrified.

“Rosabelle, tell your mother that I’m going to Challis with some potatoes.”

“You won’t ford, Alfred, will you?” asked his wife, who had overheard the remark.

“Why, yes; the upper ford is good even now, and I’m not afraid to try it.”

“But, Papa, it’s awfully deep. Bill Davis was telling me, only yesterday, that he started to cross on horseback but found it too deep to venture, and to-day has been so warm that it must have raised the river considerably more.”

“O pshaw! Haven’t I lived in this country long enough to understand that stream? I

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have forded it every spring, too; now, folks, don't be worried, for I'll be home this afternoon."

With a feeling of misgiving, Rosabelle saw her father depart, and nothing she could do seemed to interest her. She felt nervous and excited; finally she could endure it no longer, and she went in search of her brother.

"John," she said, "saddle your horse and follow Papa, I feel so uneasy."

"Now, sis, you know how angry Pa'd be, if I did."

"But he needn't know it. If he gets across all right, you can make up some excuse for being there. Chances are, he will never notice you."

"Wait till I feed them calves," he answered, "then I'll go."

"No, you must start right now; I am all impatience," said the girl.

"I'll be blest if I don't think it is all foolishness, but jest to please you, I'll go."

He took so long to get ready, that Rosabelle was almost frantic; finally, with a sigh of relief, she saw him galloping down the road. If all was right, she knew that John would soon return; so she busied herself as best she could. He started at ten o'clock, surely

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he ought to be back by eleven; but no, that hour came and passed and he did not come. Twelve, one, two, and three! What could have happened? The girl was wild with fear, yet she dared not alarm her mother. At four o'clock, she saw her brother coming down the road and ran to meet him. When he saw her coming, he almost wished himself dead; for how could he break to her the sad, sad news?

"John, where is Father?" screamed the girl.

"O sis, child, I have the worst of news for you!"

"What has happened to him; quick, John, I can bear it, anything but this terrible suspense."

"Rosabelle, he's drowned!"

"My God! My God!" groaned the girl. "I felt it was going to happen. O Papa, why were you so headstrong!" and sobs shook her so that she fell to the ground.

John waited with tear-filled eyes and suppressed feelings, until his sister's first burst of grief had somewhat subsided; then he assisted her to rise and they walked on together.

"Now, John, tell me how it happened."

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"When I got to the river, Pa was jest in the middle of it and I thought he was going to git through all right, when, suddenly, the big roan began kicking and plunging furiously. I tried to urge my horse into the water, but he wouldn't go. I beat him, I spurred him, I coaxed and patted him; but all he would do was to rear and buck. While I was trying to get him in, O Rosabelle! I looked up and there I saw the wagon had turned over and everything was going down the river."

The girl gave a terrified scream. "John! John! How can we stand it? The blow will kill Mamma. What shall we do?"

The young man placed his arm affectionately about his sister and tried to comfort her. Then he continued:

"When I saw I couldn't do him no good, I put spurs to my horse, which, at that moment, I could have killed, I hated him so, and made for Challis as fast as I could to give the alarm. There I met Mr. Drisco, who said he would send some of the women folks up here as soon as he got home."

"John, will you tell Mamma?"

"If I can," for already, the strong young fellow was convulsed with pent-up sobs. They all loved the quiet, gentle father, who

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had gone, for he had worked and toiled so patiently for them.

When they reached the house and entered it, Mrs. Pettibone called out:

“Rosabelle, is that your Pa?”

“No, Mamma, it is John.”

“Well I declare, it’s surely time for Alfred to be coming home; he said he’d not stay long in Challis.”

There was an awful pause, then their mother said:

“What ails you both? Are you dumb? Why don’t you say something?”

They looked pleadingly at each other, then John, mastering himself with a great effort, answered:

“Ma, Pa forded the river.”

“Well, what of that? I knew he would; a headstronger man never lived than that same Alfred Pettibone. When he took a notion in his head, he’d be bound to carry it out. But how do you know?”

All this time, she had been in her bedroom; but now, as she asked this question, she entered the kitchen, and, looking from one of her children to the other, saw that something was amiss.

“Why don’t you speak, John, and tell me

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what's the matter with you both? Folks would think you had seen a ghost, you look so scared and white."

"Ma, Pa tried to ford and—and—"

"And what, duncy? Why don't you say it?"

"And he was drowned," he blurted out.

The woman stood stupefied at the news, and Rosabelle thought she might have broken the news softer than that.

"John! John!" his mother cried, "don't tell me your Pa's drowned! Don't, my son, have pity on your old mother and say you were only joking," and she tried to laugh.

Rosabelle caught her in her arms and sobbed: "Mamma, Mamma, would that we could say it was not so; but John saw him and the team go down Salmon River."

"Tell me about it, John," the old lady quietly said, as Rosabelle gently led her to a chair.

After the recital, his mother looked at them, saying:

"I don't believe a word of it. I won't believe it, so there. I know he will come home to-night and then won't you feel ashamed of torturing your poor old mother," and with that she got up and walked into her bedroom.

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Rosabelle followed her and found she was not even crying, but had taken up some work and was busying herself with it. Her daughter never spoke, seeing that her mother was firm in the belief that her husband would return, but went back into the kitchen, where her brother was.

Meanwhile Mr. Drisco had left Challis and entered his own home with the bad news.

"O Hilder!" exclaimed Ena, bursting into the room, "Herbert has brought us most dreadful tidings."

"What is it, Ena?" she asked.

"Why, Mr. Pettibone was fording the river and his wagon turned over and he was drowned. A party from Challis are on the other side of the river, hunting for his body, and Herbert and the hired man are going down on this side."

"Oh, how sad! It will be a terrible blow to his family, for they were devoted to him," said Hilder.

"It will most kill Rosabelle, I know it will," and Ena broke down and sobbed bitterly. After a few minutes, she continued:

"And, Hilder, Fanny thinks I ought to go immediately to them, and I won't know what to say."

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"God will give you strength and words of consolation to say to that grief-stricken family," comforted her sister, tenderly. "Yes, Ena, go to Rosabelle; she will be so glad of your assistance and comfort."

Just then Fanny entered the room, saying: "Is it not dreadful, Hilder? Herbert says he thinks I ought to go with Ena and stay with them until they find the body. Do you think you can get along here without me?"

"Certainly, and I am glad of this arrangement."

As Ena was preparing herself for the journey, at the end of which she was to find so much sorrow and suffering, she shuddered, but immediately afterward, chided herself. "How little sympathy I must have for Rosabelle in my soul, when it is so hard to look forward to speaking words of comfort to her. It seems to me I would rather give her all I possess outright, than attempt to console her for her loss. And yet, what is there in life more sweet than to be consoled and comforted and to feel the true sympathy of some one, even a little near to us, when we are in deep sorrow. Feeling thus, I even torture myself by being afraid to speak when I know that my words of love and comfort will

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cheer her. I will take courage and do all in my power to help her." After coming to this conclusion, Ena felt much better, and, as she and Fanny drove along, they conversed over the sad event.

Rosabelle saw them as they drove up and rushed out to meet them, saying:

"I am so glad you've come; we are in such deep trouble and despair over Mamma. She will insist that Papa is not dead, but will be home to-night. I sometimes wonder if the shock has not unbalanced her mind. O Mrs. Drisco, it's so awful!" and Rosabelle gave way entirely.

Fanny held the heart-broken girl in her arms and soothed her as if she were a child. Then Ena took her gently by the hand and led her into the house. Mrs. Drisco walked into the room where Mrs. Pettibone was knitting. On seeing her, she said:

"Well now, I'm real pleased to see you, Mrs. Drisco; this is really a surprise, for you come so seldom. Take off your hat and sit down."

Mrs. Drisco did as she was asked, then she commenced chatting about what was happening at the Springs. Finally Mrs. Pettibone remarked:

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"Now would you believe, Mrs. Drisco, that my own children told me that their father was drowned? What do you think of that?"

"Well, I would not believe it unless I had to," she answered.

"Now you don't believe any such nonsense, do you?"

Not daring to answer that pointed question, Mrs. Drisco said:

"When did your husband leave home?"

"This morning early, and I am looking for him back any minute. I made the children wait supper for him, for I know he will be hungry when he gits back."

Was the woman insane, or did she really believe he was not dead? These questions puzzled Fanny Drisco. If the latter, what a horrible awakening it would be, when his body was brought home! She shuddered even to think of the effect it would produce. At ten o'clock, they persuaded Mrs. Pettibone to retire; but, for the rest, there was no sleep until the early morning hours, and then the horrible thought on awakening, as to what that dread day would bring forth!

Very little could be done by the hunting-party the evening previous; they, of course, found the wagon and dead horses, but the

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body of Mr. Pettibone had not been with them. Early next morning, one of the party saw it caught on some driftwood and it was released. When brought ashore and examined, it was found that Mr. Pettibone had not been drowned. He had been killed first by a knock on the head.

“Now we can understand why Alfred Pettibone did not swim out,” said one of the men, sadly.

They carried the remains home and, fortunately, his wife was not in the house when they were brought in. Ena was sent by some of the neighbors to caution Mrs. Drisco to keep her out until her husband was prepared for burial. When this last sad rite had been performed, they sent for them. Meanwhile, Mrs. Drisco had somewhat prepared Mrs. Pettibone for the ordeal before her; but only half-convinced, the latter went into her house.

We will draw the veil over her terrible sufferings when she realized her beloved one had been taken from her. After a considerable period, she grew calm enough to say:

“Mrs. Drisco, do you think that God is merciful and just, when he will allow that?” pointing to her dead husband.

“Mr. Pettibone was wilful; he acted against

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the wishes of his entire family, and, if he could testify for himself, I think he would say, even against his better judgment, so he took his life in his own hands and—”

“Lost it,” whispered his wife, softly, as she gazed on the face of the man she loved.

This answer of Mrs. Drisco's seemed to quiet her more than anything else; but nothing could persuade her to leave the corpse. She sat by it through the long, dreary night.

Directly behind the house rose majestically a high cliff of rocks. Mr. Pettibone had always requested to be buried there; now a grave was blasted out of the solid rock and the pall-bearers took his remains up the zig-zag path to their last resting-place, followed by the mourners.

Mrs. Drisco left next day, but Ena remained with her friend to cheer and comfort her.

CHAPTER XXIX

A CONSUMMATION

ONE LOVELY July afternoon, Ena Graham was seated in one of the rustic chairs that adorned the lawn at Drisco Springs, her hands lying listlessly in her lap and a far-away, dreamy expression in her eyes. As if by magic, the object of her thoughts was seen coming up the road; his light and elastic step seemed the embodiment of agility and strength.

"Well, this is fortunate!" Walter Aldrich exclaimed, as he hastened toward her with outstretched hand.

"This certainly must be mesmerism of thought, for mine were of you."

"Were you thinking good of me?" he asked.

"Not very," was the response, "for I was wondering if you had forgotten the girl at the Springs, seeing it has been nearly two weeks since I have heard from you."

"Come, then, with me, and, in the shadow of yon mountain, I'll relate what my heart is bursting to tell."

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A flush of pleasure mantled her brow as she walked beside him. For a few moments, there was silence, moments of ecstasy, of joy unspeakable, for she felt now that he would declare his love.

After being comfortably seated, Mr. Aldrich said:

“In the first place, Ena, has your heart never told you of my love? That has been the state of my feelings toward you since first we met; but poverty intervened and prevented the consummation of my desires. Now, there has come a change; my father died and bequeathed me fifty thousand dollars. My hope and dream may now be realized, the former of marrying you, with a proviso”—here his bright eyes twinkled—“the latter of becoming a lawyer. Tell me, darling, will you trust your happiness to my keeping?”

“It has taken you such a lengthy time to declare your feelings, that I have really forgotten whether I love you, and a little time will be required to brush up my memory.”

“But I have given you my reason! How could I ask you to be my wife, knowing the inconvenience you would have to submit to, if you accepted—that of being taken from one mining-camp to another, or else kept alone

A Consummation

much of the time. No, Ena, dearest, I loved you too much for that."

Here his brown eyes took on a look of intense feeling, as he reached over and took her hand, saying:

"Sweetheart, have I loved you in vain?"

"Not quite," she teasingly answered.

"Well, then, why so reticent? Tell me if you love me and relieve my suspense."

"Can't you restrain your impatience better than that, Mr.—I mean, Walter?"

"You tantalizing darling!" he exclaimed, as he clasped her in his strong arms. "I know now you do love me and I challenge a denial."

"There's no need of one," she said, looking with tender affection at him.

Here in the shadowy dusk, a kiss was given and taken and two lives had bound themselves with one chain. A change had come over them and life could never be quite the same again. The night air was becoming cool, so they walked to the house and into the sitting-room. Here Mr. Aldrich disclosed to Ena his plans.

"I have been studying law, sweetheart, for the past three years, hoping to save enough money to attend school; but, somehow, a miner's money goes easily and I fell short.

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This legacy will enable me to gratify my every wish. We will settle in Portland, Oregon, dearest, a city of sunshine and flowers, very much like your Southern home."

"Won't that be lovely, Walter!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"Say my name again, darling; for it sounds like sweet music from your lips."

Bending over, she softly whispered: "Walter, I love you."

How long they had been sitting, wrapped in each other's company, was uncertain, but they were startled by a vigorous knock at the door. When they opened it, there stood David Madden and Frank Walker.

"No intrusion, I hope," said Madden.

"Certainly not, Mr. Madden," said Ena. "Why do you think so?"

"Well, to be candid, Miss Ena, things looked a little suspicious, that's all."

"Looks are sometimes very deceiving," she laughingly answered; "so walk right in, gentlemen, and be seated."

"Who do you think has gone to Nevada, Aldrich?" asked Mr. Walker.

"I couldn't guess."

"Jack Brown; you remember him, the Adonis of Bayhorse?"

A Consummation

"Sure, he was a good sort of a fellow, but horribly conceited."

"I remember," continued Mr. Walker, "he and I had claims adjoining, and we used to exchange calls and even occasionally dine with one another. Well, one night, there was a dance in Challis, and Jack wanted to attend; but Dame Fortune had not smiled on him for quite a while, so his clothes were the worse for wear. In fact, he was obliged to wear a long-tailed coat to hide a deficiency in his trousers. When we arrived in the town, I said:

"'Now, Jack, there are a number of pretty girls here, and, as you are a fine dancer and a pretty good-looking chap, I know you will have a splendid time at the dance.'

"'That I will, Frank,' he said, craning his long neck to its uttermost; 'for I know few can beat me on the light fantastic.'"

"Weren't you ashamed to poke fun at him in that manner?" teased Ena.

"No, we were not, Miss Ena," answered Mr. Walker; "for he was guy enough to swallow all we said. Next day, I met him and I said:

"'How went the dance, Jack?'

"'Well, I'll tell you, my friend, the Challis

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girls have not the manners of a pig in a pig-pen.' Then I knew he had been snubbed."

"That was not a very elegant comparison," said Ena.

"Wait until I tell you what had ruffled his feathers and you won't blame him very much. I said:

"What's the trouble, Jack?"

"Well, I went over to that long, lean Miss Darcy and asked her, with my best grace, to waltz with me, and she said she was too tired.' I nearly laughed aloud at the sarcastic way he repeated this sentence. 'And would you believe it,' he continued, 'in about three minutes, that tall, lanky James Blower came along, and she got up and danced with him. My, what a figure he did cut on the floor! He couldn't dance a little bit; but she preferred him because he had a starched shirt on, while my clothes,' looking dolefully at them, 'were none too shiny.'

"Now, really, the matter was, they were all too shiny," explained Mr. Walker.

"What did you do, then, Jack?" I asked.

"Why, I just asked another girl to dance and we made it a point of following that couple up. Didn't I cut a pigeon's wing and fancy step around there, O no! I showed

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that Miss Darcy where she had missed it!"

"Wasn't he ridiculous?" said Ena.

"You rightly name him, Miss Ena," said Mr. Walker. "He was very fond of singing too, and one of the boys had only to ask him and he would continue until it grew monotonous. We told him if only his voice had been cultivated, he needn't have been there at the mine drilling ore. He drew himself up and said: 'That's what so many have said.'"

"Let's change the subject," said David Madden, "and talk about rats."

"Rats! Why, Mr. Madden, have you anything interesting to tell us of them?"

"Why, yes; did you ever see a wood-rat's nest?"

"No," replied Ena; "but I've heard that it was a curiosity."

"So it is; I was reading a book not long ago written by one of the most eminent naturalists of the day, in which he says that every bird and beast ever created always worked with some object in view, and I thought of a wood-rat. When I was at the Ram's Horn Mine, you know, Aldrich, how the roof of the bunk-house extended into the mountainside and ran along until at the other end of it there was a pitch off of some-

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where near fifty feet?"

"Yes; I remember it perfectly."

"One night a lot of us were talking and we heard a pitter-patter on the tin roof. We paid little attention to it until it continued for so long it became annoying. Knowing it was a wood-rat, we determined to see what it was about, so we watched him. We saw him go to the mountainside, take a stone in his mouth, run along the roof to the bunk-house, and drop it down the hole. He continued that all night, and, next night, one of the men shot him because we could not sleep. Now, what object had that wood-rat in view, I'll like to know? For he could not have filled up that place in a thousand years."

"None at all, he evidently must be kept busy," answered Walter Aldrich. "I remember once," he continued, "one of the men at the mine had left some ten-penny nails in the tunnel, and next day he went to look for them, to find they had disappeared. He stormed around there considerably, saying a person could not even put nails down, but what they would be stolen. We let him blow himself out, then one of the men suggested quite calmly that maybe a wood-rat had carried them off."

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“‘Wood-rat, nonsense,’ he said. ‘What would he want with nails?’

“‘What do they want with knives, forks, spoons, pipes, and such like?’ was suggested.”

“That must have been the same time that the Chinaman cook was going to be discharged for stealing all the dried fruit and candles,” remarked David Madden, “and we found the nest when we were prospecting in the side of the mountain and it contained all the missing articles, even the nails.”

“That’s it,” replied Mr. Aldrich; “I forgot you were there at the time.”

“What peculiar animals they must be,” observed Ena, “always busy at something useless to themselves.”

“And I imagine,” added Mr. Walker, “that they are not the only ones to be found.”

CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION

WHEN ENA'S engagement became known, it was the cause of both rejoicing and sorrowing, for now Mrs. Drisco would again be left without the companionship of her sisters. When Fanny was deploring this condition to her husband, he remarked:

"Really, my dear, what else could you expect, bringing two bright, fascinating girls out here where men are so much in the majority and sadly in need of wives? Did you think they were proof against all 'manly charms'?"

"O hush, Herbert," replied his wife, "you always have to say something ridiculous."

"As if we can't have 'charms' as well as the fair sex, I'd like to know. The wonder to me is that Ena stayed single so long, knowing the number she had to choose from; but, if the truth were known, she would have left us before, had Walter Aldrich asked her; for I believe he has been her preference from the first. There she is now, you can

Conclusion

ask her," he said, on leaving the room.

"I heard my name taken in vain, Fan, what were you saying about me?" asked Ena.

"We were talking of your approaching nuptials and how we disliked the idea of your leaving us, my little sister."

"Well, Fan, I can say this much, that my visit with you will always stand out a bright spot to be kept ever green in my memory, and often, after our marriage, will be a topic of conversation," and she threw her arms about her sister and kissed her.

A few words about the Pettibone family, and our story ends. After long and persistent wooing on the part of Bill Davis, Rosabelle at last consented to become his wife. Mrs. Pettibone stayed at the ranch and kept house for her son, who remained unmarried.

The End.

Climbing Up to Nature

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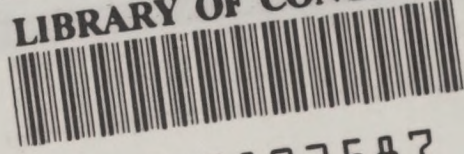
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